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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
RIVER WYE,
AND SEVERAL PARTS OF
SOUTH WALES, &c.

RELATIVE CHIEFLY TO
PICTURESQUE BEAUTY;

MADE
In the Summer of the Year 1770.

THIRD EDITION.

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.

PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY; AND
VICAR OF BOLDRE IN NEW FOREST, NEAR LYMINGTON.

London;
PRINTED FOR R. BLAMIRE, IN THE STRAND.
M.DCC.XCII.

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BY WILLIAM GILPIN, M.A.

MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES; AND

OF THE SOCIETY OF ARTS, IN NEW-YORK, NEAR LONDON.

London:

PRINTED BY R. BARNES, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXI.

(iv)
T O T H E

Rev. WILLIAM MASON.

Vicar's Hill,

November 20, 1782.

DEAR SIR,

THE very favourable manner, in which you spoke * of some observations I shewed you in MS. several years ago, *On the lakes, and mountains of the northern parts of England*, induced many of my friends, at different times, to desire the publication of them. But as they are illustrated by a great variety of drawings, the hazard and expence had rather a formidable appearance. A sub-

* See Gray's memoirs, p. 377.

scription was mentioned to me; and the late duchess dowager of Portland, with her usual generosity, sent me a hundred pounds, as a subscription from herself: but I could not accept her Grace's kindness, as I was still afraid of *an engagement with the public.*

You advised me to make an essay in a smaller work of the same kind; which might enable me the better to ascertain the expences of a larger.—I have followed your advice; and have chosen the following little piece for that purpose; which was the first of the kind I ever amused myself with; and as it is very unimportant in itself, you will excuse my endeavouring to give it some little credit by the following anecdote.

In the same year, in which this journey was made, your late valuable friend Mr. Gray † made it likewise; and hearing that I had

† Mr. Gray's own account of this tour is contained in a letter, dated the 24th of May, 1771.

had put on paper a few remarks on the scenes, which he had so lately visited, he desired a sight of them. They were then only in a rude state; but the handsome things he said of them to a friend † of his, who obligingly repeated them to me, gave them, I own, some little degree of credit in my own opinion; and make me somewhat less apprehensive in risking them before the public.

My last summer's tour was through Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, and Shropshire, five of the most beautiful counties in the kingdom. The very principal light, and capital feature of my journey, was the river Wye, which I descended in a boat for near 40 miles from Ross to Chepstow. It's banks are a succession of nameless beauties. One, out of many, you may see not ill-described by Mr. Whately, in his Observations on gardening, under the name of the New-Weir. He has also touched on two others, Tintern-abbey, and Persfield; both of them famous scenes; and both on the Wye. Monmouth, a town I never heard mentioned, lies on the same river; in a vale, that is the delight of my eyes, and the very seat of pleasure. The vale of Abergavenny, Ragland, and Chepstow-castles, Ludlow, Malvern-hills, &c. were the rest of my acquisitions; and no bad harvest in my opinion: but I made no journal myself; else you should have had it. I have indeed a short one, written by the companion of my travels, Mr. Nicholls, that serves to recall, and fix the fleeting images of these things."

† William Frazer Esq; under-secretary of state.

If this little work afforded any amusement to Mr. Gray, it was the amusement of a very late period of his life. He saw it in London, about the beginning of June 1771; and he died, you know, at the end of the July following.

Had he lived, it is possible, he might have been induced to have assisted me with a few of his own remarks on scenes, which he had so accurately examined. The slightest touches of such a master would have had their effect. No man was a greater admirer of nature, than Mr. Gray; nor admired it with better taste.

I can only however offer this little work to the public, as a hasty sketch. A country should be seen often, to be seen correctly. It should be seen also in various seasons. Different circumstances make such changes in the same landscape, as give it wholly a new aspect. But these scenes are marked just as they struck

struck the eye at first. I had no opportunity to repeat the view. It may indeed be done by the pencil, as it was in the studies.

For the drawings I must apologize in the same manner. They were hastily sketched, and under many disadvantages, and pretend at best to give only a general idea of a place, or scene, without entering into the details of portrait. They are executed in aqua-tinta by an ingenious artist*, who has done them I think, full justice. Many of the drawings he has much improved.

I do not myself thoroughly understand the process of working in aqua-tinta; but the great inconvenience of it seems to arise from its not being sufficiently under the artist's command. It is not always able to give that just gradation of light and shade, which he desires. Harsh edges will sometimes appear. It is however a very beautiful mode of multiplying drawings; and certainly comes the

* Mr. Jukes, in Howland Street.

nearest of any mode we know, to the softness of the pencil. It may indeed literally be called *drawing*; as it washes in the shades. The only difference is, that it is a more unmanageable process to wash the shades upon copper with aquafortis, than upon paper with a brush. If however the aqua-tinta mode of multiplying drawings hath some inconveniences, it is no more than every other mode of working on copper is subject to. Engraving particularly is always accompanied with a degree of stiffness. For myself, I am most pleased with the free, rough style of etching landscape with a needle, after the manner of Rembrandt, in which much is left to the imagination to make out. But this would not satisfy the public; nor indeed any one, whose imagination is not so conversant with the scenes of nature, as to make out a landscape from a hint.—This rough mode hath at least the advantage of biting

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biting the copper more strongly; and giving a greater number of good impressions.

Believe me to be, dear sir, with great regard, and esteem,

Your most obedient,

and very sincere

humble servant,

WILLIAM GILPIN.

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giving the copper more strength; and giving a
greater number of good impressions.
Believe me to be, dear Sir, with great re-
gard, and esteem,

Your most obedient,

and very sincere

humble servant,

WILLIAM GILPIN.

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TRANSLATION

LATIN QUOTATIONS.

— 149. A scene of wild beauty.

Page 38. **O**N the left of the river stood a lofty rock, as if hewn from the quarry, hanging over the precipice, haunted by birds of prey.

— 59. Perhaps you may introduce some trifling plant: but does this compensate for want of unity, and simplicity in a whole?

— 77. Every man is at liberty to fill his glass to the height, he chuses.

— 77. Glasses unequally filled.

— 100. Countries which have never known the plough, are my delight—wild woods, and rivers wandering through artless vales.

131. At

Page 131. At first, when the vessel pushing from the shore, appeared surrounded by water, all was terror. The trembling animals urging each other on both sides from it, occasioned at first some confusion: but their fears subsiding gradually, from the familiarity of the object, tranquillity took place.

— 149. A scene of wild brushwood.

— 149. Even then the awful genius of the place held the trembling rustic in awe. Even then he entered those gloomy woods with superstitious fear. Some God, no doubt (tho' what God is uncertain) inhabits those sacred groves. The Arcadians often think they see Jove himself, flashing his lightning from the clouds, when the lowering storm comes forward over the lofty woods.

— 77. Every man is at liberty to fill his glass to the height, he chooses.

— 77. Glasses unequally filled.

— 100. Countries which have never known the plough, are my delight—wild woods, and rivers wandering through ancient vales.

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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
RIVER WYE, &c.

SECTION I.

WE travel for various purposes—
to explore the culture of soils—
to view the curiosities of art—to
survey the beauties of nature—and to learn
the manners of men; their different politics,
and modes of life.

The following little work proposes a new
object of pursuit; that of examining the face
of a country *by the rules of picturesque beauty*:

B opening

opening the sources of those pleasures, which are derived from the comparison.

Observations of this kind, through the vehicle of description, have the better chance of being founded in truth; as they are not the offspring of theory; but are taken immediately from the scenes of nature, as they arise.

Crossing Hounslow-heath, from Kingston, in Surry, we struck into the Reading-road; and turned a little aside, to see the approach to Caversham-house, which winds about a mile, along a valley, through the park. This was the work of Brown; whose great merit lay in pursuing the path, which nature had marked out. Nothing can be easier, than the sweep; better united than the ground; or more ornamental, than several of the clumps: but many of the single trees, which are beeches, are heavy, and offend the eye. Almost any ordinary tree may contribute to form a group. Its deformities are lost in a crowd: nay, even the deformities of one tree may be corrected by the deformities of another. But few trees have those characters of beauty,
which

which will enable them to appear with advantage as individuals*.

From lord Cadogan's we took the Wallingford-road to Oxford. It affords some variety, running along the declivity of a range of hills; and overlooking one of the vallies of the Thames. But there is nothing very interesting in these scenes. The Thames appears; but only in short reaches. It rarely exceeds the dimensions of a pool; and does not once, as I remember, exhibit those ample sweeps, in which the beauty of a river so much consists. The woods too are frequent; but they are formal copses: and white spots, bursting every where from a chalky soil, disturb the eye.

From Wallingford to Oxford, we did not observe one good view, except at Shillingford; where the bridge, the river, and it's woody banks exhibit some scenery.

* This approach to Caversham-house, I have been informed, is now much injured.

From Oxford we proposed to take the nearest road to Rofs. As far as Witney, the country appears flat, tho in fact it rises. About the eleventh stone the high grounds command a noble semicircular distance on the left; and near Burford there are views of the same kind, on the right; but not so extensive. None of these landscapes however are perfect, as they want the accompaniments of foregrounds.

At Mr. Lenthal's, in Burford, we admired a capital picture of the family of the Mores, which is said to be Holbein's; and appeared to us intirely in that master's stile. But Mr. Walpole thinks it is not an original; and says he found a date upon it, subsequent to the death of that master. It is however a good picture of it's kind. It contains eleven figures—Sir Thomas More, and his father; two young ladies, and other branches of the family. The heads are as expressive, as the composition is formal. The judge is marked with the character of a dry, facetious, sensible, old

old man. The chancellor is handed down to us in history, both as a chearful philosopher; and as a severe inquisitor. His countenance here has much of that eagerness, and stern attention, which remind us of the latter. The subject of this piece seems to be a dispute between the two young ladies; and alludes probably to some well-known family story.

Indeed every family-picture should be founded on some little story, or domestic incident, which, in a degree, should engage the attention of all the figures. It would be invidious perhaps to tax Vandyck on this head: but if the truth might be spoken, I could mention some of his family pictures, which, if the sweetness of his colouring, and the elegant simplicity of his airs, and attitudes, did not make us forget all faults, would appear only like so many distinct portraits, stuck together on the same canvas. It would be equally invidious to omit mentioning a modern master, now at the head of his profession*, whose great fertility of invention in *employing*

* Sir Joshua Reynolds.

the figures of his family-pictures, is not among the least of his many excellences.

The country from Burford is high, and downy. A valley, on the right, kept pace with us; through which flows the Windrush; not indeed an object of sight; but easily traced along the meadows by pollard-willows, and a more luxuriant vegetation.

At Barrington we had a pleasing view, through an opening on the foreground.

About North-leach the road grows very disagreeable. Nothing appears, but downs on each side; and these often divided by stone walls, the most offensive separation of property.

From the neighbourhood of London, we had now pursued our journey through a tract of country, almost uniformly rising, tho by imperceptible degrees, into the heart of Gloucestershire;

tershire; till at length we found ourselves on the ridge of Cotefwold.

The county of Gloucester is divided into three capital parts—the Wolds, or high downy grounds towards the east—the vale of Severn in the middle—and the forest of Dean, towards the west. The first of these tracts of country we had been traversing from our entrance into Gloucestershire: and the ridge we now stood on, made the extremity of it. Here the heights which we had been ascending by such imperceptible degrees, that we hardly ever perceived the ascent, at length broke down abruptly into the lower grounds; and a vast stretch of distant country appeared at once before the eye.

I know not that I was ever more struck with the singularity, and grandeur of any landscape. Nature generally brings different countries together in some easy mode of connection. If she raise the grounds on one side by a long ascent, she commonly unites them with the country on the other, in the same easy manner. Such scenes we view without wonder, or emotion. We glide without observation, from the near grounds into the more distant. All is gradual, and easy. But when nature works in the bold, and singular stile of composition,

in which she works here—when she raises a country through a progress of a hundred miles ; and then breaks it down at once by an abrupt precipice into an expansive vale, we are immediately struck with the novelty, and grandeur of the scene.

It was the vale of Severn, which was spread before us. Perhaps no where in England a distance so rich, and at the same time so extensive, can be found. We had a view of it almost from one end to the other ; winding through the space of many leagues in a direction nearly from west to north. The eye was lost in the profusion of objects, which were thrown at once before it ; and ran wild, as it were, over the vast expanse, with rapture, and astonishment, before it could compose itself enough to make any coherent observations.—At length we begin to examine the detail ; and to separate the vast immensity before us into parts.

To the north, we looked up the vale, along the course of the Severn. The town of Cheltenham lay below our feet, at the distance of two or three miles. The vale appeared afterwards confined between Bredon hills, on the right ; and those of Malvern on the left. Right between these in the middle of the vale lay

lay Tewksbury, bosomed in wood ; the great church even at this distance made a respectable appearance. A little to the right, but in distance very remote, we might see the towers of Worcester, if the day were clear ; especially if some accidental gleam of light relieved them from the hills of Shropshire, which close the scene.

To the west, we looked toward Gloucester. And here it is remarkable, that as the objects in the northern part of the vale are confined by the hills of Malvern, and Bredon ; so in this view the vale is confined by two other hills ; which tho inconsiderable in themselves, give a character to the scene ; and the more so as they are both insulated. One of these hills is known by the name of Robin's-wood ; the other by that of Church-down, from the singularity of a church seated on it's eminence. Between these hills the great object of the vale, is the city of Gloucester ; which appeared rising over rich woody scenes. Beyond Gloucester the eye still pursued the vale into remote distance, till it united with a range of mountains.

Still more to the west arose a distant forest-view, composed of the woods of the country
uniting

uniting with the forest of Dean. Of this view the principal feature is the mouth of the Severn, where it first begins to assume a character of grandeur by mixing with the ocean. A small portion only of it is seen stretching in an acute angle over the wood. But an eye, used to perspective, seeing such a body of water, small as it appears, wearing any *determined form* at such distance, gives it credit for it's full magnitude. The Welch mountains also, which rise beyond the Severn, contributed to raise the idea: for by forming an even horizontal line along the edge of the water, they gave it the appearance of what it really is, an arm of the sea.

Having thus taken a view of the vast expanse of the vale of Severn from the extremity of the descent of Cotefwold; we had leisure next to examine the grandeur of the descent itself; which forms a foreground not less admirable than the distance. The lofty ridge, on which we stood, is of great extent; stretching beyond the bounds of Gloucestershire, both towards the north, and towards the south. It is not every where, we may suppose, of
equal

equal beauty, height, and abruptness: but fine passages of landscape, I have been told, abound in every part of it. The spot where we took this view, over the vale of Severn, is the high ground on Crickly-hill; which is a promontory standing out in the vale, between the villages of Leckhampton, and Birdlip. Here the descent consists of various rocky knolls, prominences, and abruptnesses; among which a variety of roads wind down the steep towards different parts of the vale; and each of these roads, through its whole varying progress, exhibits some beautiful view; discovering the vale either in whole, or in part, with every advantage of a picturesque foreground.

Many of these precipices also are finely wooded. Some of the largest trees in the kingdom perhaps are to be seen in these parts. The Cheltenham oak, and an elm, not far from it, are trees, which curious travellers always inquire after.

Many of these hills, which inclose the vale of Severn, on this side, furnish landscapes themselves, without borrowing assistance from the vale. The woody vallies, which run winding among them, present many pleasing pastoral

toral scenes. The cloathing country about Stroud, is particularly diversified in this way: tho many of these vallies are greatly injured in a picturesque light, by becoming scenes of habitation, and industry. A cottage, a mill, or a hamlet among trees, may often add beauty to a rural scene: but when houses are scattered through every part, the moral sense can never make a convert of the picturesque eye. Stroud-water valley especially, which is one of the most beautiful of these scenes, has been deformed lately not only by a number of buildings, but by a canal, cut through the middle of it.

Among the curiosities of these high grounds, is the seven-well-head of the Thames. In a glen near the road, a few limpid springs, gushing from a rock, give origin to this noblest of English rivers; tho I suppose several little streams, in that district, might claim the honour with equal justice, if they could bring over opinion.

Nothing can give a stronger idea of the nature of the country I have been describing, than this circumstance of it's giving rise to the Thames. On one side, within half a dozen miles below the precipice, the Severn
has

has arrived at so much consequence, as to take it's level from the tides of the ocean : on the other, the Thames arising at our feet, does not arrive at that dignity, till it have performed a course of two hundred and fifty miles.

Having descended the heights of Crickly, the road through the vale continues so level to Gloucester, that we scarce saw the town, till we entered it.

The cathedral is of elegant Gothic on the outside, but of heavy Saxon within : that is, these different modes of architecture *prevail most* in these different parts of the building. For in fact, the cathedral of Gloucester is a compound of all the several modes, which have prevailed from the days of Henry the second to those of Henry the seventh, and may be said to include, in one part or other, the whole history of sacred architecture during that period. Many parts of it have been built in the times of the purest Gothic : and others, which have been originally Saxon, appear plainly to have been altered into the Gothic ; which was no uncommon practice.

A Grecian

A Grecian screen is injudiciously introduced to separate the choir. The cloisters are light and airy.

As we leave the gates of Glocester, the view is pleasing. A long stretch of meadow, filled with cattle, spreads into a foreground. Beyond, is a screen of wood, terminated by distant mountains; among which Malvern-hills make a respectable appearance. The road to Ross, leads through a country, woody, rough, hilly, and picturesque.

Ross stands high, and commands many distant views; but that from the church-yard is the most admired; and is indeed very amusing. It consists of an easy sweep of the Wye; and of an extensive country beyond it. But it is not picturesque. It is marked by no characteristic objects: it is broken into too many parts; and it is seen from too high a point. The spire of the church, which is the man of Ross's *heaven-directed spire*, tapers beautifully. The inn, which was the house

house he lived in, is known by the name of the *man of Rofs's house*.

At Rofs, we planned our voyage down the Wye to Monmouth; and provided a covered-boat, navigated by three men. Less strength would have carried us down; but the labour is in rowing back.

house the first in, is known by the name of
the man of Robt's house.

At Robt, we planned our voyage down the
Wye to Monmouth, and provided a covered-
boat, navigated by three men. Let's through
would have carried us down, but the labor
is in towing back. We were towed back
by a small boat, and a small boat, and a small boat.

S E C T. II.

THE WYE takes it's rise near the summit of Plinlimmon; and dividing the counties of Radnor, and Brecknoc, passes through the middle of Herefordshire. From thence becoming a second boundary between Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire, it falls into the Severn, a little below Chepstow. To this place from Ross, which is a course of near forty miles, it flows in a gentle, uninterrupted stream; and adorns, through it's various reaches, a succession of the most picturesque scenes.

The beauty of these scenes arises chiefly from two circumstances—the *lofty banks* of the river, and it's *mazy course*; both which are accurately observed by the poet, when he describes the Wye, as *ecchoing* through it's

C *winding*

winding bounds*. It could not well *eccho*, unless it's banks were both *lofty* and *winding*.

From these two circumstances the views it exhibits, are of the most beautiful kind of perspective; free from the formality of lines.

The most perfect river-views, thus circumstanced, are composed of four grand parts; the *area*, which is the river itself; the *two side-screens*, which are the opposite banks, and mark the perspective; and the *front-screen*, which points out the winding of the river.

If the Wye ran, like a Dutch canal, between parallel banks there could be no front-screen: the two side-screens, in that situation, would lengthen to a point.

If a road were under the circumstance of a river winding like the Wye, the effect would be the same. But this is rarely the case. The road pursues the irregularity of the coun-

* Pleas'd Vaga ecchoes thro' it's winding bounds,
And rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds.

Pope's Eth. Ep.
try.

try. It climbs the hill; and sinks into the valley: and this irregularity gives the views it exhibits, a different character.

The views on the Wye, tho composed only of these *simple parts*, are yet *exceedingly varied*.

They are varied, first, by the *contrast of the screens*. Sometimes one of the side-screens is elevated; sometimes the other; and sometimes the front. Or both the side-screens may be lofty; and the front either high, or low.

Again, they are varied by the *folding of the side-screens over each other*; and hiding more or less of the front. When none of the front is discovered, the folding-side either winds round, like an amphitheatre*; or it becomes a long reach of perspective.

* The word *amphitheatre*, strictly speaking, is a complete inclosure: but, I believe, it is commonly accepted, as here, for any circular piece of architecture, tho it do not wind *entirely* round.

These *simple* variations admit still farther variety from becoming *complex*. One of the sides may be compounded of various parts; while the other remains simple: or both may be compounded; and the front simple: or the front alone may be compounded.

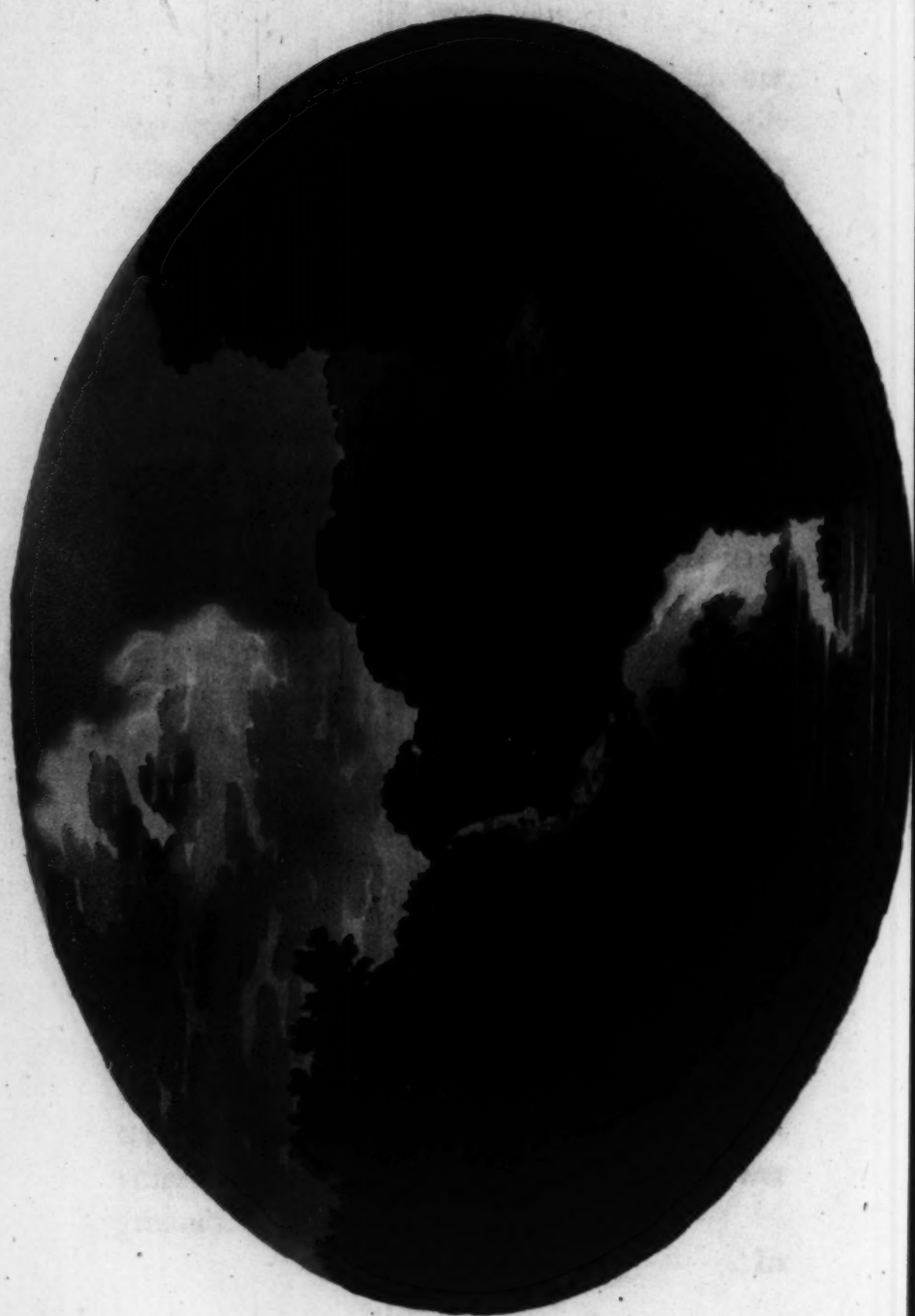
Besides these sources of variety, there are other circumstances, which, under the name of *ornaments*, still farther increase them. *Plain* banks will admit all the variations we have yet mentioned: but when this *plainness* is *adorned*, a thousand other varieties arise.

The *ornaments* of the Wye may be ranged under four heads—*ground—wood—rocks—and buildings*.

The *ground*, of which the banks of the Wye consist, (and which hath thus far been considered only in it's *general effect*,) affords every variety, which ground is capable of receiving; from the steepest precipice, to the flattest meadow. This variety appears in the line formed by the summits of the banks; in the swellings, and excavations of their declivities; and in the unequal surfaces of the lower grounds.

In









In many places also the ground is *broken*; which adds new sources of variety. By *broken ground*, we mean only such ground, as hath lost it's turf, and discovers the naked soil. Often we see a gravelly earth shivering from the hills, in the form of water-falls: often dry, stony channels, guttering down precipices; the rough beds of temporary torrents: and sometimes so trifling a cause, as the rubbing of sheep against the sides of little banks, or hillocks, will occasion very beautiful breaks.

The *colour* too of the broken soil is a great source of variety, the yellow, or the red oker; the ashy grey; the black earth; or the marley blue. And the intermixtures of these with each other, and with patches of verdure, blooming heath, and other vegetable tints, still increase that variety.

Nor let the fastidious reader think, these remarks descend too much into detail. Were an extensive distance described, a forest-scene, a sea coast view, a vast semicircular range of mountains, or some other grand display of nature, it would be trifling to mark these minute circumstances. But here the hills around exhibit little, except *foregrounds*; and

it is necessary, where we have no distances, to be more exact in finishing objects at hand.

The next great ornament on the banks of the Wye, are it's *woods*. In this country are many works, carried on by fire; and the woods being maintained for their use, are periodically cut down. As the larger trees are generally left, a kind of alternacy takes place: what is, this year, a thicket; may, the next, be an open grove. The woods themselves possess little beauty, and less grandeur; yet, as we consider them merely as the *ornamental* parts of a scene, the eye will not examine them with exactness, but compound for a *general effect*.

One circumstance, attending this alternacy, is pleasing. Many of the furnaces, on the banks of the river, consume charcoal, which is manufactured on the spot; and the smoke, issuing from the sides of the hills; and spreading it's thin veil over a part of them, beautifully breaks their lines, and unites them with the sky.

The chief deficiency, in point of wood, is of large trees on the *edge of the water*; which, clumped here and there, would diversify

verify the hills, as the eye passes them; and remove that heaviness, which always, in some degree, (tho here as little as any where) arises from the continuity of ground. They would also give a degree of distance to the more removed parts; which in a scene like this, would be attended with peculiar advantage: for as we have here so little distance, we wish to make the most of what we have.—But trees *immediately on the foreground* cannot be suffered in these scenes; as they would obstruct the navigation of the river.

The *rocks*, which are continually starting through the woods, produce another *ornament* on the banks of the Wye. The rock, as all other objects, tho more than all, receives it's chief beauty from contrast. Some objects are beautiful in themselves. The eye is pleased with the tuftings of a tree: it is amused with pursuing the eddying stream; or it rests with delight on the shattered arches of a Gothic ruin. Such objects, independent of composition, are beautiful in themselves. But the rock, bleak, naked, and unadorned, seems scarcely to deserve a place among them. Tint

it with mosses, and lichens of various hues, and you give it a degree of beauty. Adorn it with shrubs and hanging herbage, and you still make it more picturesque. Connect it with wood, and water, and broken ground; and you make it in the highest degree interesting. It's *colour*, and it's *form* are so accommodating, that it generally blends into one of the most beautiful appendages of landscape.

Different kinds of rocks have different degrees of beauty. Those on the Wye, which are of a greyish colour, are in general, simple, and grand; rarely formal, or fantastic. Sometimes they project in those beautiful square masses, yet broken and shattered in every line, which is characteristic of the most majestic species of rock. Sometimes they slant obliquely from the eye in shelving diagonal strata: and sometimes they appear in large masses of smooth stone, detached from each other, and half buried in the soil. Rocks of this last kind are the most lumpish, and the least picturesque.

The various *buildings*, which arise every where on the banks of the Wye, form the
last

last of it's *ornaments*; abbeys, castles, villages, spires, forges, mills, and bridges. One or other of these venerable vestiges of past, or cheerful habitations of present times, characterize almost every scene.

These *works of art* are however of much greater use in *artificial*, than in *natural* landscape. In pursuing the beauties of nature, we range at large among forests, lakes, rocks, and mountains. The various scenes we meet with, furnish an inexhausted source of pleasure. And tho the works of art may often give animation and contrast to these scenes; yet still they are not necessary. We can be amused without them. But when we introduce a scene on canvas—when the eye is to be confined within the frame of a picture, and can no longer range among the varieties of nature, the aids of art become more necessary, and we want the castle, or the abbey, to give consequence to the scene. Indeed the landscape-painter seldom thinks his view perfect, without characterizing it by some object of this kind.

S E C T. III.

HAVING thus analyzed the Wye, and considered separately it's constituent parts—the *steepness* of it's banks—it's *mazy* course—the *ground*, *woods*, and *rocks*, which are it's native ornaments—and the *buildings*, which still farther adorn it's natural beauties; we shall now take a view of some of those delightful scenes, which result from the *combination* of all these picturesque materials.

I must however premise, how ill-qualified I am to do justice to the banks of the Wye, were it only from having seen them under the circumstance of a continued rain; which began early in the day, before one third of our voyage was performed.

It

It is true, scenery *at hand* suffers less under such a circumstance, than scenery *at a distance*; which it totally obscures.

The picturesque eye also, in quest of beauty, finds it almost in every incident, and under every appearance of nature. Even the rain gave a gloomy grandeur to many of the scenes; and by throwing a veil of obscurity over the removed banks of the river, introduced, now and then, something like a pleasing distance. Yet still it hid greater beauties; and we could not help regretting the loss of those broad lights, and deep shadows, which would have given so much lustre to the whole; and which, ground like this, is, in a peculiar manner, adapted to receive.

The first part of the river from Ross, is tame. The banks are low; and scarce an object attracts the eye, except the ruins of *Wilton-castle*, which appear on the left, shrouded with a few trees. But the scene wants accompaniments to give it grandeur.

The bank however soon began to swell on the right, and was richly adorned with wood.

We





We admired it much; and also the vivid images reflected from the water; which were continually disturbed, as we sailed past them; and thrown into tremulous confusion, by the dashing of our oars. A disturbed surface of water endeavouring to collect it's scattered images, and restore them to order, is among the *pretty* appearances of nature.

We met with nothing, for some time, during our voyage, but these grand woody banks, one rising behind another; appearing, and vanishing, by turns, as we doubled the several capes. But tho no particular objects characterized these different scenes; yet they afforded great variety of pleasing views, both as we wound round the several promontories, which discovered new beauties, as each scene opened—and when we kept the same scene a longer time in view, stretching along some lengthened reach, where the river is formed into an irregular vista by hills shooting out beyond each other, and going off in perspective.

The

The channel of no river can be more decisively marked, than that of the Wye. *Who bath divided a water-course for the flowing of rivers?* saith the Almighty in that grand apostrophe to Job on the works of creation. The idea is happily illustrated here. A nobler *water-course* was never *divided* for any river, than this of the Wye. Rivers, in general, pursue a devious course along the countries, through which they flow; and form channels for themselves by constant fluxion. But sometimes, as in these scenes, we see a channel marked with such precision; that it appears as if originally intended only for the bed of a river.

After sailing four miles from Ross, we came to *Goodrich-castle*; where a grand view presented itself; and we rested on our oars to examine it. A reach of the river, forming a noble bay, is spread before the eye. The bank, on the right, is steep, and covered with wood; beyond which a bold promontory shoots out, crowned with a castle, rising among trees.

This view, which is one of the grandest on the river, I should not scruple to call
correctly





correctly picturesque; which is seldom the character of a purely natural scene.

Nature is always great in design. She is an admirable colourist also; and harmonizes tints with infinite variety, and beauty. But she is seldom so correct in composition, as to produce an harmonious whole. Either the foreground, or the background, is disproportioned: or some awkward line runs across the piece: or a tree is ill-placed: or a bank is formal: or something or other is not exactly what it should be. The case is, the immensity of nature is beyond human comprehension. She works on a *vast scale*; and, no doubt, harmoniously, if her schemes could be comprehended. The artist, in the mean time, is confined to a *span*; and lays down his little rules, which he calls the *principles of picturesque beauty*, merely to adapt such diminutive parts of nature's surfaces to his own eye, as come within it's scope.—Hence therefore, the painter, who adheres strictly to the *composition* of nature, will rarely make a good picture. His picture must contain a *whole*: his archetype is but a *part*. In general however he may obtain views of such parts of nature, as with the addition of a few trees;
or

or a little alteration in the foreground, (which is a liberty, that must always be allowed) may be adapted to his rules; tho he is rarely so fortunate as to find a landscape completely satisfactory to him. In the scenery indeed at Goodrich-castle the parts are few; and the whole is a very simple exhibition. The complex scenes of nature are generally those, which the artist finds most refractory to his rules of composition.

In following the course of the Wye, which makes here one of it's boldest sweeps, we were carried almost round the castle, surveying it in a variety of forms. Some of these retrospects are good; but, in general, the castle loses, on this side, both it's own dignity, and the dignity of it's situation.

The views *from* the castle, were mentioned to us, as worth examining: but the rain was now set in, and would not permit us to land.

As we leave *Goodrich-castle*, the banks on the left, which had hitherto contributed less
to

to entertain us, began now principally to attract our attention ; rearing themselves gradually into grand steepes ; sometimes covered with thick woods ; and sometimes forming vast concave slopes of mere verdure ; unadorned, except here and there, by a straggling tree : while the flocks, which hung browsing upon them, seen from the bottom, were diminished into white specks.

The view at *Rure-dean-church* unfolds itself next ; which is a scene of great grandeur. Here, both sides of the river are steep, and both woody ; but in one the woods are intermixed with rocks. The deep umbrage of the forest of Dean occupies the front ; and the spire of the church rises among the trees. The reach of the river, which exhibits this scene, is long ; and, of course, the view, which is a noble piece of natural perspective, continues some time before the eye : but when the spire comes directly in front, the grandeur of the landscape is gone.

The *stone-quarries*, on the right, from which the bridge of Bristol was built ; and,

D

on

on the left, the furnaces of *Bishop's-wood*, vary the scene, tho' they are objects of no great importance in themselves,

For some time, both sides of the river continue steep and beautiful. No particular object indeed characterizes either: but in such exhibitions as these, nature characterizes her own scenes. We admire the infinite *variety*, with which she *shapes*, and *adorns*, these vast concave, and convex forms. We admire also that *varied touch*, with which she expresses every object,

Here we see one great distinction between *her* painting, and that of all her *copyists*. Artists universally are *mannerists* in a certain degree. Each has his particular mode of forming particular objects. His rocks, his trees, his figures are cast in one mould: at least they possess only a *varied sameness*. Ruben's figures are all full-fed: Salvator's, spare, and long-legged. Nature has a different mould for every object she presents.

The artist again discovers as little variety in filling up the surfaces of bodies, as he does

in

in delineating their forms. You see the same *touch*, or something like it, universally prevail; tho applied to different subjects. But nature's touch is as much varied as the form of her objects.

In every part of painting except execution, an artist may be assisted by the labours of those, who have gone before him. He may improve his skill in composition—in light and shade—in perspective—in grace and elegance; that is, in all the scientific parts of his art. But with regard to *execution*, he must set up on his own stock. A *mannerist*, I fear, he must be. If he get a manner of his own, he *may* be an agreeable mannerist: but if he copy another's, he *will certainly* be a formal one. The more closely he copies nature, the better chance he has of being free from this general defect.

At *Lidbroke* is a large wharf, where coals are shipped for Hereford, and other places. Here the scene is new, and pleasing. All has thus far been grandeur, and tranquillity. It continues so yet; but mixed with life, and bustle. A road runs diagonally along the
D 2
bank;

bank ; and horses, and carts appear passing to the small vessels, which lie against the wharf, to receive their burdens. Close behind, a rich, woody hill hangs sloping over the wharf, and forms a grand back-ground to the whole. The contrast of all this business, the engines used in lading, and unlading, together with the variety of the scene, produce all together a picturesque assemblage. The sloping hill is the front-screen ; the two side-screens are low.

But soon the front becomes a lofty side-screen on the left ; and sweeping round the eye at *Welsh-Bickner*, forms a noble amphitheatre.

At *Cold-well*, the front-screen first appears as a woody hill, swelling to a point. In a few minutes, it changes it's shape, and the woody hill becomes a lofty side-screen, on the right ; while the front unfolds itself into a majestic piece of rock-scenery.

Here

Here we should have gone on shore, and walked to the *New-Weir*, which by land is only a mile; ~~the~~ by water, I believe, it is three. This walk would have afforded us, we were informed, some very noble river-views: Nor should we have lost any thing by relinquishing the water; which in this part was uninteresting.

The whole of this information we should probably have found true; if the weather had permitted us to have profited by it. The latter part of it was certainly well-founded: for the water-views, in this part, were very tame. We left the rocks, and precipices behind; exchanging them for low-banks, and sedges.

But the grand scenery soon returned. We approached it however gradually. The views at *White-church* were an introduction to it. Here we sailed through a long reach of hills; whose sloping sides were covered with large, lumpish, detached stones; which seemed, in a course of years, to have rolled from a girdle

of rocks, that furrounds the upper regions of these high grounds on both sides of the river; but particularly on the left.

From these rocks we soon approached the *New-Weir*; which may be called the second grand scene on the Wye.

The river is wider, than usual, in this part; and takes a sweep round a towering promontory of rock; which forms the side-screen on the left; and is the grand feature of the view. It is not a broad, fractured face of rock; but rather a woody hill, from which large projections, in two or three places, burst out; rudely hung with twisting branches, and shaggy furniture; which, like mane round the lion's head, give a more savage air to these wild exhibitions of nature. Near the top a pointed fragment of solitary rock, rising above the rest, has rather a fantastic appearance: but it is not without it's effect in marking the scene.

A great master in landscape has adorned an imaginary view with a circumstance exactly similar:

Stabat acuta flix, præcis undiq; faxis,
—dorso insurgens, altissima visu,

Dirarum

*Dirarum nidis domus opportuna volucrum,
—prona jugo; lævum incumbibat ad amnem.**

On the right side of the river, the bank forms a woody amphitheatre, following the course of the stream round the promontory. It's lower skirts are adorned with a hamlet; in the midst of which, volumes of thick smoke, thrown up at intervals, from an iron-forge, as it's fires receive fresh fuel, add double grandeur to the scene.

But what peculiarly marks this view, is a circumstance on the water. The whole river, at this place, makes a precipitate fall—of no great height indeed; but enough to merit the name of a cascade: tho to the eye above the stream, it is an object of no consequence. In all the scenes we had yet passed, the water moving with a slow, and solemn pace, the objects around kept time, as it were, with it; and every steep, and every rock, which hung over the river, was solemn, tranquil, and majestic. But here, the violence of the stream, and the roaring of the waters, impressed a new character on the scene: all was agitation, and

* *Æn.* VIII. 233.

uproar ; and every steep, and every rock stared with wildness, and terror.

A kind of fishing-boat is used in this part of the river, which is curious. It is constructed of waxed canvas, stretched over a few slight ribs ; and holds only a single man. It is called a *coricle* ; and is derived probably, as it's name imports, from that species of ancient boat, which was formed of *leather*.

An adventurous fellow, for a wager, once navigated a *coricle* as far as the isle of Lundy, at the mouth of the Bristol-channel. A full fortnight, or more, he spent in this dangerous voyage ; and it was happy for him, that it was a fortnight of serene weather. Many a current, and many an eddy ; many a flowing tide, and many an ebbing one, afforded him occasion to exert all his skill, and dexterity. Sometimes his little bark was carried far to leeward ; and sometimes as far to windward : but still he recovered his course ; persevered in his undertaking ; and at length happily achieved it. When he returned to the *New-Weir*, report says, the account of his expedition





dition was received like a voyage round the world.

Below the *New-Weir* are other rocky views of the same kind, though less beautiful. But description flags in running over such a monotony of terms. *High, low, steep, woody, rocky*, and a few others, are all the colours of language we have, to describe scenes; in which there are infinite gradations; and, amidst some general sameness, infinite peculiarities.

After we had passed a few of these scenes, the hills gradually descend into Monmouth; which lies too low to make any appearance from the water: but on landing, we found it a pleasant town, and neatly built. The town-house, and church, are both handsome.

The transmutations of time are often ludicrous. Monmouth-castle was formerly the palace of a king; and birth-place of a mighty prince: it is now converted into a yard for fattening ducks.

The

dition was received like a voyage round the world.

The fun had set before we arrived at Monmouth. Here we met our chaise: but, on enquiry, finding a voyage more likely to produce amusement, than a journey, we made a new agreement with our bargemen; and embarked again, the next morning.

monotony of
sweaty, and a few others, and all the colours of
language we have to describe scenes; in
which there are infinite gradations; and
amidst some general language, infinite pe-
culiarities.

After we had sailed a few of these scenes,
the hills gradually changed into mountains;
which did not look any longer as if they
were the work of man, but on looking we found it
a pleasing tower, and nearly built a fine tower-
house, and church, are both handsome.

The transformations of time are often such
as to be almost unperceived. The same place
which was once a king's palace, and birth-place of a mighty
prince: it is now converted into a yard for
laming ducks.

S E C T. IV.

AS we left Monmouth, the banks, on the left, were, at first, low; but on both sides they soon grew steep, and woody; varying their shapes, as they had done the day before. The most beautiful of these scenes is in the neighbourhood of St. Breval's castle; where the vast, woody declivities, on each hand, are uncommonly magnificent. The castle is at too great a distance to make any object in the view.

The weather was now serene: the sun shone; and we saw enough of the effect of light, in the exhibitions of this day, to regret the want of it the day before.

During

During the whole course of our voyage from Ross, we had scarce seen one corn-field. The banks of the Wye consist, almost entirely either of wood, or of pasturage; which I mention as a circumstance of peculiar value in landscape. Furrowed-lands, and waving-corn, however charming in pastoral poetry, are ill-accommodated to painting. The painter never desires the hand of art to touch his grounds.—But if art *must* stray among them—if it *must* mark out the limits of property, and turn them to the uses of agriculture; he wishes, that these limits may, as much as possible, be concealed; and that the lands they circumscribe, may approach, as nearly as may be, to nature—that is, that they may be pasturage. Pasturage not only presents an agreeable surface: but the cattle, which graze it, add great variety, and animation to the scene.

The meadows, below Monmouth, which ran shelving from the hills to the water-side, were particularly beautiful, and well-inhabited, Flocks of sheep were every where hanging on their green steeps; and herds of cattle occupying the lower grounds. We often failed
past





past groups of them laving their sides in the water : or retiring from the heat under sheltered banks.

In this part of the river also, which now begins to widen, we were often entertained with light vessels gliding past us. Their white sails passing along the sides of woodland hills were very picturesque.

In many places also the views were varied by the prospect of bays, and harbours in miniature ; where little barks lay moored, taking in ore, and other commodities from the mountains. These vessels, designed plainly for rougher water, than they at present incountred, shewed us, without any geographical knowledge, that we approached the sea.

From Monmouth we reached, by a late breakfast-hour, the noble ruin of *Tintern-abbey* ; which belongs to the Duke of Beaufort ; and is esteemed, with its appendages, the most

most beautiful and picturesque view on the river.

Castles, and abbeys have different situations, agreeable to their respective uses. The castle, meant for defence, stands boldly on the hill; the abbey, intended for meditation, is hid in the sequestered vale.

Ab! happy thou, if one superior rock
 Bear on it's brow, the shivered fragment huge
 Of some old Norman fortrefs: happier far,
 Ah then most happy, if thy vale below
 Wash, with the crystal coolness of it's rills,
 Some mould'ring abbey's ivy-vested wall.

Such is the situation of *Tintern-abbey*. It occupies a gentle eminence in the middle of a circular valley, beautifully screened on all sides by woody hills, through which the river winds it's course; and the hills closing on it's entrance, and on it's exit, leave no room for inclement blasts to enter. A more pleasing retreat could not easily be found. The woods, and glades intermixed; the winding of the river; the variety of the ground; the splendid ruin, contrasted with the objects of nature; and the elegant line formed by the summits of the hills, which include the whole; make all together





together a very enchanting piece of scenery. Every thing around breathes an air so calm, and tranquil; so sequestered from the commerce of life; that it is easy to conceive, a man of warm imagination, in monkish times, might have been allured by such a scene to become an inhabitant of it.

No part of the ruins of Tintern is seen from the river, except the abbey-church. It has been an elegant Gothic pile; but it does not make that appearance as a *distant* object, which we expected. Tho the parts are beautiful, the whole is ill-shaped. No ruins of the tower are left, which might give form, and contrast to the buttresses, and walls. Instead of this, a number of gabel-ends hurt the eye with their regularity; and disgust it by the vulgarity of their shape. A mallet judiciously used (but who durst use it?) might be of service in fracturing some of them; particularly those of the cross isles, which are both disagreeable in themselves, and confound the perspective.

But were the building ever so beautiful, incompassed as it is with shabby houses, it could make no appearance from the river. From a stand near the road, it is seen to more advantage.

But

But if *Tintern-abbey* be less striking as a distant object, it exhibits, on a nearer view, (when the whole together cannot be seen, but the eye settles on some of it's nobler parts,) a very enchanting piece of ruin. Nature has now made it her own. Time has worn off all traces of the chissel: it has blunted the sharp edges of rule and compass; and broken the regularity of opposing parts. The figured ornaments of the east-window are gone; those of the west-window are left. Most of the other windows, with their principal ornaments, remain.

To these were superadded the ornaments of time. Ivy, in masses uncommonly large, had taken possession of many parts of the wall; and given a happy contrast to the grey-coloured stone, of which the building is composed. Nor was this undecorated. Mosses of various hues, with lichens, maiden-hair, penny-leaf, and other humble plants had over-spread the surface; or hung from every joint, and crevice. Some of them were in flower, others only in leaf; but all together gave those full-blown tints, which add the richest finishing to a ruin. Such is the beautiful appearance, which *Tintern-abbey* exhibits on the *outside* in those parts,

parts, where we can obtain a nearer view of it. But when we *enter it*, we see it in most perfection: at least, if we consider it as an independent object, unconnected with landscape. The roof is gone: but the walls, and pillars, and abutments, which supported it, are entire. A few of the pillars indeed have given way; and here and there, a piece of the facing of the wall: but in correspondent parts, one always remains to tell the story. The pavement is obliterated: the elevation of the choir is no longer visible: the whole area is reduced to one level; cleared of rubbish; and covered with neat turf, closely shorn; and interrupted with nothing, but the noble columns, which formed the isles, and supported the tower.

When we stood at one end of this awful piece of ruin; and surveyed the whole in one view—the elements of air, and earth, its only covering, and pavement; and the grand, and venerable remains, which terminated both—perfect enough to form the perspective; yet broken enough to destroy the regularity; the eye was above measure delighted with the beauty, the greatness, and the novelty of the scene. More *picturesque* it certainly would have been, if the area, unadorned, had been

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left

left with all it's rough fragments of ruin scattered round ; and bold was the hand that removed them : yet as the outside of the ruin, which is the chief object of *picturesque curiosity*, is still left in all it's wild, and native rudeness ; we excuse—perhaps we approve—the neatness, that is introduced within. It *may* add to the *beauty* of the scene—to it's *novelty* it undoubtedly *does*.

Among other things in this scene of desolation, the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants were remarkable. They occupy little huts, raised among the ruins of the monastery ; and seem to have no employment, but begging : as if a place once devoted to indolence, could never again become the seat of industry. As we left the abbey, we found the whole hamlet at the gate, either openly soliciting alms ; or covertly, under the pretence of carrying us to some part of the ruins, which each could shew ; and which was far superior to any thing, which could be shewn by any one else. The most lucrative occasion could not have excited more jealousy, and contention.

One

One poor woman we followed, who had engaged to shew us the monk's library. She could scarce crawl; shuffling along her palsied limbs, and meagre, contracted body, by the help of two sticks. She led us, through an old gate, into a place over spread with nettles, and briars; and pointing to the remnant of a shattered cloister, told us, that was the place. It was her own mansion. All indeed she meant to tell us, was the story of her own wretchedness; and all she had to shew us, was her own miserable habitation. We did not expect to be interested: but we found we were. I never saw so loathsome a human dwelling. It was a cavity, loftily vaulted, between two ruined walls; which streamed with various-coloured stains of unwholesome dews. The floor was earth; yielding, through moisture, to the tread. Not the merest utensil, or furniture of any kind appeared, but a wretched bedstead, spread with a few rags, and drawn into the middle of the cell, to prevent it's receiving the damp, which trickled down the walls. At one end was an aperture; which served just to let in light enough to discover the wretchedness within.—When we stood in the midst of this cell of misery;

and felt the chilling damps, which struck us in every direction, we were rather surprised, that the wretched inhabitant was still alive; than that she had only lost the use of her limbs.

The country about *Tintern-abbey* hath been described as a solitary, tranquil scene: but it's immediate environs only are meant. Within half a mile of it are carried on great iron-works; which introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity.

The ground, about these works, appears from the river to consist of grand woody hills, sweeping, and intersecting each other, in elegant lines. They are a continuation of the same kind of landscape, as that about *Tintern-abbey*; and are fully equal to it.

As we still descend the river, the same scenery continues. The banks are equally steep, winding, and woody; and in some parts diversified by prominent rocks, and ground finely broken, and adorned.

But

But one great disadvantage began here to invade us. Hitherto the river had been clear, and splendid; reflecting the several objects on it's banks. But it's waters now became ouzy, and discoloured. Sludgy shores too appeared, on each side; and other symptoms, which discovered the influence of a tide.

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S E C T. V.

MR. Morris's improvements at Persfield, which we soon approached, are generally thought as much worth a traveller's notice, as any thing on the banks of the Wye. We pushed on shore close under his rocks; and the tide being at ebb, we landed with some difficulty on an ouzy beach. One of our bargemen, who knew the place, served as a guide; and under his conduct we climbed the steep by an easy, regular zig-zag.

The eminence, on which we stood, (one of those grand eminences, which overlooks the Wye,) is an intermixture of rock, and wood; and forms, in this place, a concave semicircle; sweeping round in a segment of two miles. The river winds under it; and the scenery, of course, is shewn in various

directions. The river itself indeed, as we just observed, is charged with the impurities of the soil it washes; and when it ebbs, its verdant banks become slopes of mud: but if we except these disadvantages, the situation of Persfield is noble.

Little indeed was left for improvement, but to open walks, and views, through the woods, to the various objects around them. All this the ingenious proprietor hath done with great judgment; and hath shewn his rocks, his woods, and his precipices, under various forms; and to great advantage. Sometimes a broad face of rock is presented, stretching along a vast space, like the walls of a citadel. Sometimes it is broken by intervening trees. In other parts, the rocks rise above the woods; a little farther, they sink below them: sometimes they are seen through them; and sometimes one series of rocks appears rising above another: and tho many of these objects are repeatedly seen, yet seen from different stations, and with new accompaniments, they appear new. The winding of the precipice is the magical secret, by which all these enchanting scenes are produced.

We

We cannot however call these views picturesque. They are either presented from too high a point; or they have little to mark them as characteristic; or they do not fall into such composition, as would appear to advantage on canvas. But they are extremely romantic; and give a loofe to the most pleasing riot of imagination.

These views are chiefly shewn from different stands in a close walk, carried along the brow of the precipice. It would be invidious perhaps to remark a degree of tediousness in this walk; and too much sameness in many of the views; notwithstanding the general variety, which inlivens them: but the intention probably is not yet complete; and many things are meant to be hid, which are now too profusely shewn.*

Having seen every thing on this side of the hill, the walks we pursued, led us over the ridge of it to the opposite side. Here the ground, depositing it's wild appearance, assumes a more civilized form. It consists of a great

* As it is many years, since these remarks were made, several alterations have probably, since that time, taken place.

variety of lawns, intermixed with wood, and rock; and, tho it often rises, and falls, yet it descends without any violence into the country beyond it.

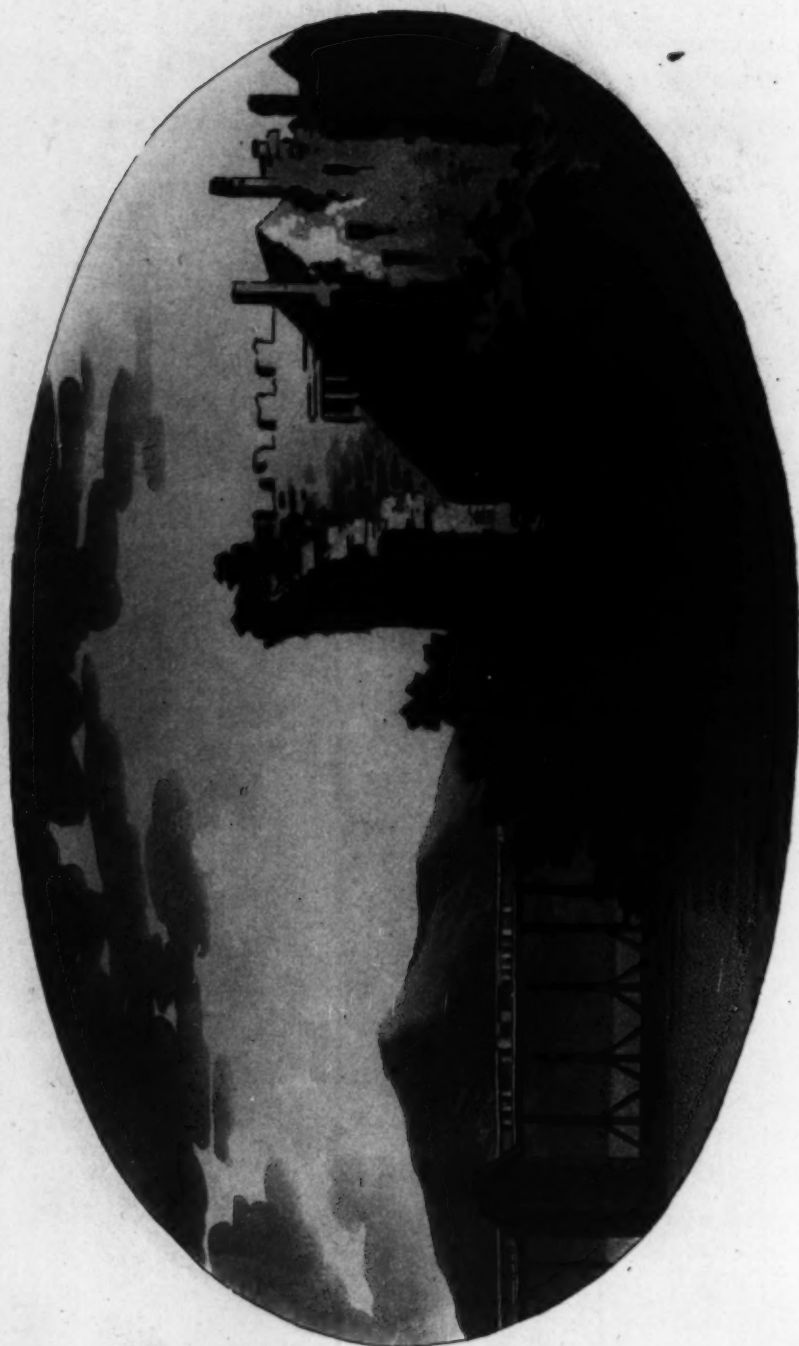
The views, on this side, are not the romantic steeps of the Wye: but tho of another species, they are equally grand. They are chiefly distances, consisting of the vast waters of the Severn, here an arm of the sea; bounded by a remote country——of the mouth of the Wye entering the Severn——and of the town of Chepstow, and it's castle, and abbey. Of all these distant objects an admirable use is made; and they are shewn, (as the rocks of the Wye were on the other side) sometimes in parts; and sometimes all together. In one station we had the scenery of both sides of the hill at once.

It is a pity, the ingenious embellisher of these scenes could not have been satisfied with the grand beauties of nature, which he commanded. The shrubberies he has introduced in this part of his improvements, I fear, will rather be esteemed paltry. As the embellishments of a house; or as the ornament of little scenes, which have nothing better to recommend them, a few flowering shrubs artfully com-









composed may have their elegance and beauty: but in scenes, like this, they are only splendid patches, which injure the grandeur, and simplicity of the whole.

————— Fortasse cupressum

Scis simulare: quid hoc? —————

————— Sit quidvis simplex duntaxat et unum.

It is not the shrub, which offends: it is the *formal introduction* of it. Wild under-wood may be an appendage of the grandest scene. It is a beautiful appendage. A bed of violets, or lillies may enamel the ground, with propriety, at the root of an oak: but if you introduce them artificially in a border, you introduce a trifling formality; and disgrace the noble object you wish to adorn.

From the scenes of Persfield we walked to Chepstow; our barge drawing too much water to pass the shallows, till the return of the tide. In this walk we wished for more time, than we could command, to examine the romantic scenes which furrounded us: but we were obliged to return, that evening, to Monmouth.

The

The road, at first, affords beautiful distant views of those woody hills, which had entertained us on the banks of the Wye; and which appeared to as much advantage, when connected with the country, as they had already done in union with the river. But the country soon loses it's picturesque form; and assumes a bleak unpleasant wildness.

About seven miles from Chepstow, we had an extensive view into Wales, bounded by mountains very remote. But this view, tho much celebrated, has little, except the grandeur of extension, to recommend it. And yet, it is possible, that in some lights it may be very picturesque; and that we might only have had the misfortune to see it in an unfavourable one. Different lights make so great a change even in the *composition* of landscape—at least in the *apparent* composition of it, that they create a scene perfectly new. In distance especially this is the case. Hills and vallies may be deranged; awkward abruptnesses, and hollows introduced; and the effect
of

of woods, and castles, and all the ornamental detail of a country, lost. On the other hand, these ingredients of landscape may in *reality* be awkwardly introduced; yet through the magical *influence of light*, they may be altered, softened, and rendered pleasing.

In a mountainous country particularly, I have often seen, during the morning hours, a range of hills, rearing their summits, in ill-disposed, fantastic shapes. In the afternoon, all this incorrect rudeness hath been removed; and each mishapen summit hath softened beautifully into some pleasing form.

The different seasons of the year also produce the same effect. When the sun rides high in summer; and when, in the same meridian, he just skirts the horizon in winter, he forms the mountain-tops, and indeed the whole face of a country, into very different appearances.

Fogs also vary a distant country as much as light, softening the harsh features of landscape; and spreading over them a beautiful, grey, harmonizing tint.

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We remark farther, on this subject, that scarce any landscape will stand the test of *different lights*. Some searching ray, as the sun veers round, will expose it's defects. And hence it is, that almost *every* landscape is seen best under *some peculiar* illumination—either of an evening, or of a morning, or, it may be, of a meridian, sun.

During many miles we kept upon the heights; and, through a long, and gentle descent, approached Monmouth. Before we reached it we were benighted: but as far as we could judge of a country through the grey obscurity of a summer-evening, this seemed to abound with many beautiful, woody valleys among the hills, which we descended. A light of this kind, tho not so favourable to landscape, is very favourable to the imagination. This active power embodies half-formed images; which it rapidly combines; and often composes landscapes, perhaps more beautiful, if the imagination be well-stored, than any, that can be found in nature herself. They are formed indeed from nature—from the most beautiful of her scenes;
and

and having been treasured up in the memory, are called into these fanciful creations by some distant resemblances, which strike the eye in the multiplicity of dubious surfaces, that float before it.

S E C T. VI.

HAVING thus navigated the Wye between Ross, and Chepstow, we had such pleasing accounts of it's beautiful scenery above Ross, that if our time had permitted, we could have wished to have explored it.

A journal however fell into my hands, (since the first edition of this book was printed) of a tour to the source of the Wye; and from thence through the midland counties of Wales; which I shall put into a little form; and making a few picturesque remarks, which the subject may occasionally suggest, shall insert for the benefit of those, who may have more time than we had.

From Ross to Hereford the great road leaves the river, which is hardly once seen. But it is not probable, that much is lost; for the whole country here has a tame appearance.

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The cathedral of Hereford consists, in many parts, of rich Gothic. The west-front is falling fast to decay, and is every year receiving more the form of a fine ruin.*

At Hereford we again meet the Wye; of which we have several beautiful views from the higher grounds. The road now follows the course of the river to the Hay; winding along it's northern banks.

About six miles from Hereford, and very little out of the road, stands Foxley. The form of the grounds about it, and the beautiful woods that surround it, are said to be worth seeing. My journalist says it contains a choice collection of pictures; and some good drawings of landscape by the late Mr. Price.

The ruins of Bradwardine-castle appear soon in view; tho but little of them remains. At a bridge near them you cross the Wye, and now traverse the south-side of the river. The country, which had been greatly varied before, begins now to form bolder swells. Among these Mirebich-hill, which rises full in front, continues some time before the eye, as a considerable object.

* A subscription I hear, is now opened to repair it.

Leaving Witney-bridge on the right, you still continue your course along the southern bank of the river; and come soon in view of the ruins of Clyfford-castle; where tradition informs us, the celebrated Rosamond spent her early life.

Soon after, you arrive at the Hay; a town pleasantly situated on the Wye. It was formerly a Roman station; and was long afterwards considered as a place of great strength; being defended by a castle, and lofty walls, till Owen Glendouer laid it in ashes in one of those expeditions, in which he drove Harry Bolingbroke

—thrice from the banks of Wye,
And sandy-bottomed Severn—

If you have time to make a little excursion, you will find about half way between the Hay, and Abergavenny, the ruins of Llan-
tony-priory. Dugdale describes it, in his Monasticon, as a scene richly adorned with wood. But Dugdale lived a century ago; which is a term that will produce, or de-

stroy, the finest scenery. It has had the latter effect here; for the woods about Llan-tony-priory are now totally destroyed; and the ruin is wholly naked, and desolate.

After this excursion, you return again to the Hay; and continue your rout to Bualt, still on the south side of the river.

On the north side, about four miles beyond the Hay, stands Maeslough, the ancient seat of the Howarths. The house shews the neglect of it's possessor; tho the situation is in it's kind perhaps one of the finest in Wales. The view from the hall-door is spoken of as wonderfully amusing. A lawn extends to the river; which incircles it with a curve, at the distance of half a mile. The banks are enriched with various objects; among which two bridges, with winding roads, and the tower of Glasbury-church, surrounded by wood, are conspicuous. A distant country equally enriched, fills the remote parts of the landscape, which is terminated by mountains. One of the bridges in this view, that at Glasbury, is remarkably light, and elegant, consisting of several arches. —How these various objects are brought to-

together, I know not. I should fear there are too many of them.

As you continue your rout to Bualt, the country grows grander, and more picturesque. The valley of the Wye becomes contracted, and the road runs at the bottom; along the edge of the water.

It is possible, I think, the Wye may in this place be more beautiful, than in any other part of it's course. Between Rofs, and Chepstow, the grandeur, and beauty of *it's banks* are it's chief praise. The *river itself* has no other merit, than that of a winding surface of smooth water. But here, added to the same decoration from it's banks, the Wye itself assumes a more beautiful character; pouring over shelving rocks; and forming itself into eddies, and cascades, which a solemn parading stream through a flat channel, cannot exhibit.

An additional merit also accrues to such a river from the different forms it assumes, according to the fullness, or emptiness of the stream. There are rocks of all shapes, and sizes; which continually vary the appearance of the water, as it rushes over, or plays among

them: so that such a river, to a picturesque eye, is a continued fund of new entertainment.

The Wye also, in this part of it's course, still receives farther beauty from the woods, which adorn it's banks; and which the navigation of the river, in it's lower reaches, cannot allow. Here the whole is perfectly rural, and unincumbered. Even a boat, I believe, is never seen beyond the Hay. The boat itself might be an ornament: but we would not exchange for it such a river, as would not suffer a boat.

Some beauties however the smooth river possesses above the rapid one. In the latter you cannot have those reflections, which are so ornamental to the former.—Nor can you have in the rapid river, the opportunity of contemplating the grandeur of it's banks from the surface of the water—unless indeed the road winds close along the river at the bottom, when perhaps you may see them with additional advantage.

The foundation of these criticisms on *smooth* and *agitated* water, is this. When water is exhibited in *small quantities*, it wants the agitation of a torrent, a cascade, or some other adventitious circumstance, to give it consequence.

quence. But when it is spread out in the reach of some capital river—in a lake—or an arm of the sea—it is then able to support it's own dignity. In the former case it aims at beauty: in the latter at grandeur. Now the Wye has in no part of it's course, a quantity of water sufficient to give it any great degree of grandeur; so that of consequence the *smooth* part must, on the whole, yield to the more *agitated*, which possesses more beauty.

In this wild enchanting country stands Llan-goed, the house of sir Edward Williams. It is adorned, like the house at Foxley, with woods, and playing grounds: but is a scene totally different. Here however are finer trees, than those at Foxley; which, when examined as individuals, appear to great advantage: tho my journalist has heard, that some of the finest of them have lately been cut down.

The road still continues through the same beautiful country, along the banks of the Wye; and in a few miles farther brings you to Bualt. This town is seated in a pleasant vale, surrounded with woods.

A little beyond Bualt, where the river Irvon falls into the Wye, is a field, where, tradition says, Llewellyn, the last prince of Wales, was put to death. Some historians say, he was killed in battle; but the traditional account of his being killed near Bualt seems more probable; and that he fell by the hands of an assassin. When Edward invaded Wales, we are informed, Llewellyn had intrenched himself in the fastnesses of Snowdon. Here he might probably have foiled his adversary: but some of his troops having been successful against the earl of Surrey, one of Edward's generals, Llewellyn came down from his strong holds, with the hope of improving his advantage, and offered Edward battle. Llewellyn was totally routed; and, in his flight into Glamorganshire, slept the night before he was murdered, at Llechryd, which is now a farm-house. Here the farrier, who shod his horse, knew him under his disguise; and betrayed him to the people of Bualt, who put him to death; and are to this day stigmatized with the name of *Brad wyr y Bualbt*, the traitors of Bualt.

At

At Bualt you cross the Wye again, and now pursue your rout along the north side of the river. The same grand scenery continues—lofty banks—woody vales—a rocky channel, and a rapid stream winding through it.

Soon after you come to the sulphureous springs of Llanydrindod, which you leave on the right; and crossing the river Ithon, reach Rhaader; a town about thirteen miles beyond Bualt.—To a Welshman the appearance of the Wye at *Rhaader*, need not be described. The word signifies a *waterfall*. There is no cascade indeed of consequence near the place; but the river being pent up within close rocky banks, and the channel being steep, the whole is a succession of water-falls.

As you leave Rhaader, you begin to approach the sources of the Wye. But the river having now lost it's chief supplies, becomes more and more insignificant; and as the country

country becomes wilder, and more mountainous; the scenery of the river is now *disproportioned*. There is not a sufficiency of water in the landscape to balance the land.

Llangerig, which is about twelve miles from Rhaader, is the last village you find on the banks of the Wye. Soon after all signs of inhabitancy cease. You begin to ascend the skirts of Plinlimmon; and after rising gradually about ten miles from Llangerig, you arrive at the sources of a river, which through a course of so many leagues hath afforded you so much entertainment.

It is a singular circumstance, that within a quarter of a mile of the well-head of the Wye, arises the Severn. The two springs are nearly alike: but the fortunes of rivers, like those of men, are owing to various little circumstances, of which they take the advantage in the early part of their course. The Severn meeting with a tract of ground, rising on the right, soon after it leaves Plinlimmon, receives a push towards the north-east. In this direction

tion it continues it's course to Shrewsbury. There it meets another obstruction, which turns it as far to the south-east. Afterwards still meeting with favourable opportunities, it successfully improves them; enlarging it's circle; sweeping from one country to another; receiving large accessions every where of wealth and grandeur; till at length with a full tide, it enters the ocean as an arm of the sea.—In the mean time the Wye, meeting with no particular opportunities of any consequence to improve it's fortunes, never makes any figure as a capital river; and at length becomes subservient to that very Severn, whose birth, and early setting out in life, were exactly similar to it's own.—Between these two rivers is comprehended a district, consisting of great part of the counties of Montgomery, Radnor, Salop, Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester. Of the last county that beautiful portion only is inclosed, which forms the forest of Dean.

The country about Plinlimmon, vast, wild, and unfurnished, is neither adorned with accompaniments, to be a scene of beauty: nor, should I suppose, could afford the materials to form a scene of grandeur.—The grandeur

deur consist in simplicity, it must take *some form of landscape*; otherwise it is a shapeless waste—monstrous without proportion.—As there is nothing therefore in these inhospitable regions to detain you long; and no refreshment to be had, except a draught of pure water from the fountains of the Wye, you will soon be inclined to return to Rhaader.

From Rhaader my journal leads you into Cardiganshire. Crossing the Wye you ascend a very steep mountain, about seven miles over. Then skirting the banks of a sweet little river, the Elan, which falls into the Wye, you pass through a corner of Montgomeryshire; which brings you to the verge of Cardiganshire.

The passage into this county is rather tremendous. You stand on very high ground; and see extending far below, a long, narrow, contracted valley. The perspective, from the top gives it rather the appearance of a chasm. Down one of the precipitous sides of this valley, I understand, the road hurries you; while the river Istwith at the bottom is ready to receive you, if your foot should slip, or your horse stumble.

Having

Having descended safely to the bottom of the valley; and having passed through it, at its close, you cross the river over a handsome bridge; and arrive at the village of Pentre. Near this place is Havod, the seat of Mr. Johnes, member for Radnorshire; which affords so much beautiful scenery, that you should by no means pass by it. It will open suddenly upon you, at the close of a well-conducted approach. The house is new; built in a style I learn, between Gothic, and Moorish. It is a style of building I am not acquainted with; but I am informed it has a good effect. It is a large commodious mansion, richly furnished. One thing is worth observing. Over the chimney of the dining-room is placed, or to be placed, (for I believe the house is not finished,) a neat tablet of white marble with this inscription:

—————Prout cuiq; libido est,

Siccat inequales cyathos—————

The Welsh gentry are very remarkable for their hospitality; which sometimes, I have heard, will not allow the *inequales cyathos*; but brings all to a *brimming level*. The spirit

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of this inscription, I hope, is diffusing itself more and more over the country.

But elegant houses, and rich furniture are every where to be found. The scenery at Havod is the object; and such scenery is rarely met with.—The walks are divided into what is called the *lady's-walk*, a circuit of about three miles—and the *gentleman's-walk*, about six. To these is added a more extensive round, which might properly come under the denomination of a *riding*, if in all parts it was accessible to horse men.

The general ground-plot of these walks, and the scenery through which they convey you, is this.

The river Istwith runs at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the house, which stands upon a lawn, consisting of varied grounds descending to the river. It is a rapid stream, and it's channel is filled with rocks, like many other Welsh streams, which form cataracts, and cascades in various parts—more broken, and convulsed, than the Wye about Bualt. It's banks consist of great variety of wooded recesses—hills—fides of mountains—and contracted vallies—thwarting, and opposing each other in
various

various forms: and adorned with little cascades running every where among them, in guttered chasms. Of the grandeur and beauty of these scenes I can speak as an eye-witness: for tho I was never on the spot, I have seen a large collection of drawings, and sketches (not fewer than between twenty and thirty) which were taken from them.

Through this variety of grand scenery the several walks are conducted. The views shift rapidly from one to another; each being characterized by some circumstance peculiar to itself.

The artificial ornaments are such chiefly, as are necessary. Many bridges are wanted, both in crossing the Istwith; and the several streams, which run into it from the surrounding hills: and they are varied as much as that species of architecture will admit, from the stone arch to the Alpine plank—In one place you see a cottage, pleasantly seated among the thickets of a woody hill, which Mr. Johnes intends to fit up for the accommodation of a band of musicians; for so a pack of hounds may be called among the hills, and dales, and ecchoing rocks of these grand scenes.

Among

Among the natural curiosities of the place, is a noble cascade sixty feet high, which is seen through a cavern, partly natural, and partly artificial. You enter it by a passage, cut through a rock four feet broad, and seven high; which continues about twenty yards; and brings you into a very lofty, perforated cavern, through which you see the cascade to great advantage.

From the scenes of Havod, you continue your excursions, among some other grand, and beautiful scenery in that country.

You are carried first to the *Devil's bridge*, about four miles from Havod. I do not clearly understand the nature of the scenery here from the account given in my journal; but I should suppose it is only one grand piece of foreground, without any distance, or accompaniments; and probably one of those scenes, which is itself sufficient to form a picture. The plan of it is, a rocky chasm; over which is thrown an arch. Between these cheeks, and just beneath the bridge, the river Funnach falls abruptly down the space of several yards; and afterwards meeting with other steeps, makes

makes it's way, after a few of these interruptions, into the Rhydol, a little below. The bridge, I should suppose, is an interesting object. It consists I understand of two arches, one thrown over the other : the under one, which is that said to be built by the devil, was not thought sufficiently strong. The common people suppose, when he built it, he had some mischief in his head.

From the Devil's bridge, you visit another, called *Monk's bridge*; where the same kind of scenery is exhibited under a different modification.

From thence you descend into the vale of Rhydol, called so from the river of that name, which passes through it.

If the Welsh counties, distinguished for so much beauty of scenery of various kinds, are remarkable for pre-eminence in any mode, I think it is their *vales*. Their lakes are greatly exceeded, both in grandeur, and beauty, by those of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Scotland. Nor are their mountains, as far as I have observed, of such picturesque form, as many I have seen in those countries. They

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are often of a heavy, lumpish kind : for there are orders of architecture in mountains, as well as in palaces. Their rivers I allow are often very picturesque ; and so are their sea-coast views. But their *vales* and *vallies*, I think, exceed those of any country I ever saw.

The vale of Rhydol is described as a very grand, and extensive scene, continuing not less than ten miles, among rocks, hanging woods, and varied ground, which in some parts, becomes mountainous ; while the river is every where a beautiful object ; and twice, or three times, in it's passage through the vale, is interrupted in it's course, and formed into a cascade. This is a circumstance in a *vale*, I think, rather uncommon. In a *contracted valley* it is frequent : but an *extended vale*, as I apprehend this to be, is seldom so interrupted, as not to give way to the river, on one side, or the other. I can easily however imagine, that when the *whole vale* is interrupted, as I conceive it to be here, it will occasion a very beautiful scene, if the eye from so good a *foreground* hath such an elevated station, as will enable it to trace the winding of the vale, as a distance, beyond the cascade. But this is perhaps reasoning (as we often do

on

on higher subjects,) without sufficient grounds. On the spot, I should probably find, that all these conceptions are wrong—that the obstructions of the river in the vale of Rhydol are no advantage to the scene—or perhaps, after all, that the *vale of Rhydol* does not deserve that name; but is only a *contracted valley* of considerable length.

At the end of this *vale* or *valley*, by whichever of these names it ought to be distinguished, stand the ruins of *Abyrystbwick-castle*. Of this fortress little now remains, but a solitary tower, over-looking the sea. Once it was the residence of the great Cadwallader; and in all the Welsh-wars was considered as a fortress of the first consequence. Even so late as the civil wars of the last century it was esteemed a place of strength.

But the rich lead-mines, in it's neighbourhood were the basis of it's glory. These mines are said to have yielded near a hundred ounces of silver from a ton of lead; and to have produced a profit of two thousand pounds a month. Here Sir Hugh Middleton made that vast fortune, which he expended afterwards on the new river. But a gentleman of the name of Bushel, raised these mines to

their greatest height. He was allowed by Charles the first the privilege of setting up a mint in this castle, for the benefit of paying his workmen. Here therefore all the business of the mines was transacted, which made Abyrysthwick-castle a place of more consequence, and resort than any other place in Wales. King Charles also appointed Mr. Bushel governor of the isle of Lundy; where he made a harbour for the security of his vessels, which carried the produce of his mines up the Severn. When the civil wars broke out, he had an opportunity of shewing his gratitude; which he did with the magnificence of a prince. He clothed the king's whole army; and offered his majesty a loan, which was considered as a gift, of forty thousand pounds. Afterwards, when Charles was pressed by the parliament, Mr. Bushel raised him a regiment, among his miners, at his own expence.

From the vale of Rhydol, you seek again the banks of the *Istwith*; and enter a vale, which takes it's name from the river.

This scene is another proof of what I have just observed of the Welsh vales. From the accounts I have heard of it, I should suppose

suppose it a scene of extraordinary beauty—*less romantic* than the vale of Rhydol; but *more sylvan*. Nature has introduced the rock more sparingly; but she has made great amends by wood: tho there is one part of it mentioned, in which an immense rock forms a very grand feature.—It is much easier however to *conceive* the variety of these scenes, than to describe them. Nature's alphabet consists only of four letters; wood—water—rock—and ground: and yet with these four letters she forms such varied compositions; such infinite combinations, as no language with an alphabet of twenty-four can describe.

From the vale of Iftwith, you may visit the ruins of the abbey of *Strata Florida*. But there is little among those ruins, I should suppose, worth notice, except a Saxon gateway; and that can hardly be an object of much beauty.

The painter therefore, who can make little use of this old abbey, consigns it over to the antiquarian; who tells you, that it was formerly the sacred repository of the bones of several of the Welsh princes; and that here the records, and acts of the principality were preserved for many generations.

From the ruins of Strata Florida you return to Hereford, through Rhosfair, Rhaader, Pinabout, and new Radnor; in which rout I find nothing in my journal mentioned, as worth notice; tho it is hardly possible, that in so large a tract of rough country, there should not be many picturesque passages.

The painter therefore, who can make little use of this old abbey, compares it over to the antiquarian; who tells you, that it was formerly the sacred repository of the bones of several of the Welsh princes; and that here the records and acts of the princeps were preserved for many generations.

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S E C T. VII.

FROM Monmouth to Abergavenny, by Ragland-castle, the road is a good stone causeway, (as the roads, in these parts, commonly are,) and leads through a pleasant, inclosed country; discovering, on each side, extensive views of rich cultivation.

Ragland-castle. seemed to stand, (as we saw it from the heights) in a vale: but as we descended, it took an elevated station. It is a large, and very noble ruin: more perfect than ruins of this kind commonly are. It contains two areas within the ditch; into each of which you enter by a lofty, and deep gateway.

The buildings, which circumscribe the first area, consist of the kitchen, and offices.

It is amusing to hear stories of ancient hospitality. "Here are the remains of an oven," said our conductor, "which was large enough to bake a whole ox; and of a fire-range, wide enough to roast him."

The grand hall, or banquetting-room, a large and lofty apartment, forms the screen between the two areas; and is perfect, except the roof. The music-gallery may be distinctly traced; and the butteries, which divide the hall from a parlour. Near the hall is shewn a narrow chapel.

On viewing the comparative size of halls and chapels in old castles, one can hardly, at first, avoid observing, that the founders of these ancient structures supposed, a much greater number of people would meet together to feast, than to pray. But yet we may perhaps account for the thing, without calling in question the piety of our ancestors. The hall was meant to regale a whole country; while the chapel was intended only for the private use of the inhabitants of the castle.

The whole area of the first inclosure, is vaulted, and contains cellars, dungeons, and other subterraneous apartments.—The build-
ings





ings of the second area are confined merely to chambers.

Near the castle stands the citadel, a large octagonal tower; two or three sides of which are still remaining. This tower is incircled by a separate moat; and was formerly joined to the castle by a draw-bridge.

Ragland-castle owes its present picturesque form to Cromwell; who laid his iron hands upon it; and shattered it into ruin. A window is shewn, through which a girl in the garrison, by waving a handkerchief, introduced his troops.

From Ragland-castle the views are still extensive, the roads inclosed, and the country rich. The distances are skirted by the Brecknoc-hills; among which the *Sugar-loaf* makes a remarkable appearance.

The Brecknoc-hills are little more, than gentle swellings, cultivated to the top. For many miles they kept their station in a distant range on each side. But, by degrees, they began to close in; approximating more and more; and leaving in front, a narrow pass between them; through which an
extensive

extensive country appeared. Through this pass, we hoped, the progress of our road would lead us; as it seemed to open into a fair, and beautiful country.

It led us first to Abergavenny, a small town, which has formerly been fortified, lying under the hills. We approached it by the castle; of which nothing remains, but a few staring ruins.

From hence we were carried, as we expected, through the pass; which we had long observed at a distance, and which opened into the vale of Usk.

The vale of Usk, is a delightful scene. The river, from whence it borrows its name, winds through the middle of it; and the hills, on both sides, are diversified with woods, and lawns. In many places, they are partially cultivated. We could distinguish little cottages, and farms, faintly traced along their shadowy sides; which, at such a distance, rather varied, and enriched the scene; than impressed it with any regular, and unpleasing shapes.

Through









Through this kind of road we passed many miles. The Usk continued, every where, our playful companion: and if, at any time, it made a more devious curve, than usual, we were sure to meet it again, at the next turn. Our passage through the vale was still more invigorated by many little foaming rills crossing the road (some of them large enough to make bridges necessary,) and two ruined castles; with which, at proper intervals, the country is adorned.

After leaving the latter of them, called Tretower-castle, we mounted some high grounds; which gave a variety to the scene, tho not so picturesque an exhibition of it. Here the road brought us in view of *Langor's-pool*; which is no very inconsiderable lake. As we descended these heights, the Usk met us once more at the bottom, and conducted us into Brecknoc.

Brecknoc is a very romantic place, abounding with broken grounds, torrents, dismantled towers, and ruins of every kind. I have seen few places, where a landscape-painter

painter might get a collection of better ideas. The castle has once been large; and is still a ruin of dignity. It is easy to trace the main body, the citadel, and all the parts of ancient fortification.

In many places indeed these works are too much ruined, even for picturesque use. Yet, ruined as they are, as far as they go, they are very amusing. The arts of modern fortification are ill calculated for the purposes of landscape. The angular, and formal works of Vauban, and Cohorn, when it comes to their turn to be superseded by works of superior invention, will make a poor figure in the annals of picturesque beauty. No eye will ever be delighted with their ruins: while not the least fragment of a British or a Norman castle exists, that is not surveyed with delight.

But the most beautiful scenery we saw at Brecknoc, is about the abbey. We had a view of it, tho but a transient view, from a little bridge in the neighbourhood. There we saw a sweet limpid stream, glistening over a bed of pebbles; and forming two or three cascades, as it hurried to the bridge. It issued from a wood, with
which

which its banks were beautifully hung. Amidst the gloom arose the ruins of the abbey, tinged with a bright ray, which discovered a profusion of rich Gothic workmanship; and exhibited in pleasing contrast the grey stone, of which the ruins are composed, with the feathering foliage, that floated round them: but we had not time to examine, how all these beauteous parts were formed into a whole.—The imagination formed it, after the vision vanished. But tho it might possibly create a *whole*, more agreeable to the rules of painting; yet it could scarce do justice to the beauty of the *parts*.

From *Brecknoc*, in our road to Trecaſtle, we enter a country very different from the vale of Uſk. This too is a vale: but nature always marks even kindred ſcenes with ſome peculiar character. The vale of Uſk is almoſt one continued winding ſweep. The road *now* played among a variety of hills. The whole ſeemed to conſiſt of one great vale divided into a multiplicity of parts. All together, they wanted unity; but ſeparately, afforded a number

ber of those pleasing passages, which, treasured up in the memory, become the ingredients of future landscapes.

Sometimes the road, instead of winding round the hills, took the shortest way over them. In general, they are cultivated, like those of the vale of Usk : but as the cultivation in many of them is brought too near the eye, it becomes rather offensive. Our best ideas were obtained from such, as were adorned with wood ; and fell, in various forms, into the vallies below.

In these scenes we lost the Usk, our sweet, amusing companion in the vale : but other rivers of the same kind frequently met us, tho they seldom continued long ; disappearing in haste, and hiding themselves among the little, tufted recesses, at the bottom of the hills.

In general, the Welsh gentlemen, in these parts, seem fond of whitening their houses, which gives them a disagreeable glare. A speck of white is often beautiful ; but white, in profusion, is, of all tints, the most inharmonious. A white seat, at the corner of
a wood

a wood, or a few white cattle grazing in a meadow, inliven a scene perhaps more, than if the seat, or the cattle, had been of any other colour. They have meaning, and effect. But a front, and two staring wings; an extent of rails; a huge, Chinese bridge; the tower of a church; and a variety of other large objects, which we often see daubed over with white, make a disagreeable appearance; and unite ill with the general simplicity of nature's colouring.

Nature never colours in this offensive way. Her surfaces are never white. The chalky cliff is the only permanent object of the kind, which she allows to be her's; and this seems rather a force upon her from the boisterous action of a furious element. But even here it is her constant endeavour to correct the offensive tint. She hangs her chalky cliff with samphire, and other marine plants; or she stains it with various hues; so as to remove, in part at least, the disgusting glare. The western end of the isle of Wight, called the Needle-cliffs, is a remarkable instance of this. These rocks are of a substance nearly resembling chalk: but nature has so reduced their unpleasant

sant lustre by a variety of chastising tints, that in most lights they have even a beautiful effect. She is continually at work also, in the same manner, on the white cliffs of Dover; tho her endeavours here are more counteracted by a greater exposure. But here, and in all other places, were it not for the intervention of foreign causes, she would in time throw her green mantle over every naked and exposed part of her surface.

In these remarks I mean only to insinuate—that *white* is a hue, which nature seems studious to expunge from all her works, except in the touch of a flower, an animal, a cloud, a wave, or some other diminutive, or transient object—and that *her mode* of colouring should always be the model of *our's*.

In animadverting however on *white objects*, I would only censure the mere *raw tint*. It may easily be corrected, and turned into stone-colours of various hues; which tho light, if not too light, may often have a good effect.

Mr. Lock, who did me the favour to overlook these papers, made some remarks on this part of my subject, which are so new, and so excellent, that I cannot without impropriety, take the credit of them myself.

“ White

“ White offers a more extended scale of light, and shadow, than any other colour, when near; and is more susceptible of the predominant tint of the air, when distant. The transparency of it's shadows, (which in near objects partake so little of darkness, that they are rather second lights) discover, without injuring the principal light, all the details of surfaces.

“ I partake however of your general dislike to the colour; and though I have seen a very *splendid effect* from an *accidental light* on a white object; yet I think it a hue, which oftener injures, than it improves the scene. It particularly disturbs the air in it's office of graduating distances; shews objects nearer, than they really are; and by pressing them on the eye, often gives them an importance, which from their form, and situation, they are not intitled to.

“ The white of snow is so active, and refractory, as to resist the discipline of every harmonizing principle. I think I never saw Mont Blanc, and the range of snows, which run through Savoy, in union with the rest of the landscape, except when they were tinged by the rays of the rising, and setting
H sun;

fun; or participated of some other tint of the surrounding sky. In the clear, and colourless days so frequent in that country, the Glaciers are always out of tune."

S E C T. VIII.

FROM Trecastle we ascended a steep of three miles; which the country people call a *pitch*. It raised us to a level with the neighbouring hills; whose rugged summits formed all the landscape we had. No sweet views into the vallies below presented themselves. All around was wild, and barren.

From these heights we descended gently, through a space of seven miles. As we approached the bottom, we saw, at a distance, the town of Llandovery, seated in the meadows below, at the conflux of several rivulets. Unadorned with wood, it made only a naked appearance: but light wreaths of smoke, rising from it in several parts, shewed that it was inhabited: while a ray of the setting sun singled it out among the objects of the vale; and gave it some little

consequence in the landscape. As we descended into it, it's importance increased. We were met by an old castle, which had formerly defended it, tho nothing remains, except the ruins of the citadel.

Llandovery stands at the entrance of the vale of Towy; which, like other vales, receives it's name from the river, that winds through it. This delightful scene opened before us, as we left Llandovery, in our way to Llandilo; which stands about twelve miles lower in the vale.

The vale of Towy is still less a scene of cultivation than that of Ufk. The woodland views are more frequent; and the whole more wild, and simple. The scenery seems precisely of that kind, with which a great master in landscape was formerly enamoured.

————— Juvat arva videre
Non rastris hominum, non ulli obnoxia curæ:
Rura mihi, & rigui placeant in vallibus amnes:
Flumina amem, sylvasq;—————

In this vale, the river Towy, tho it frequently met us, and always kept near us;
yet

yet did not so constantly appear, and bear us such close company, as the Usk had done before. Some heights too we ascended; but such heights as were only proper stands, from whence we viewed in greater perfection the beauties of the vale.

This is the scene, which Dyer celebrated, in his poem of *Grongar-hill*. Dyer was bred a painter; and had here a picturesque subject: but he does not give us so good a landscape, as might have been expected. We have no where a complete, formed distance; tho it is the great idea suggested by such a vale as this: no where any touches of that beautiful obscurity, which melts a variety of objects into one rich whole. Here and there, we have a few *accidental* strokes, which belong to distance;* tho seldom masterly: I call them *accidental*; because they

* As where he describes the beautiful form which removed cultivation takes:

How close and small the hedges lie!

What streaks of meadow cross the eye!

Or a distant spire seen by sun-set:

Rising from the woods the spire

Seems from far, ascending fire.

are not employed in producing a landscape; nor do they in fact unite in any such idea; but are rather introductory to some moral sentiment; which, however good in itself, is perhaps here rather forced, and mistimed.

Dinevawr-castle, which stands about a mile from Llandilo, and the scenery around it, were the next objects of our curiosity. This castle is seated on one of the sides of the vale of Towy; where it occupies a bold eminence, richly adorned with wood. It was used, not long ago, as a mansion: but Mr. Rice, the proprietor of it, has built a handsome house in his park, about a mile from the castle; which, however, he still preserves, as one of the greatest ornaments of his place.

This castle also is taken notice of by Dyer in his Grongar-hill; and seems intended as an object in a distance. But *his* distances,

Or the aerial view of a distant hill;

— yon summits soft and fair
Clad in colours of the air;
Which to those, who journey near,
Barren, brown, and rough appear.

I observed,





I observed, are all in confusion; and indeed it is not easy to separate them from his foregrounds.

The landscape he gives us, in which the castle of Dinevawr makes a part, is seen from the brow of a distant hill. The first object, that meets his eye, is a wood. It is just beneath him; and he easily distinguishes the several trees, of which it is composed;

The gloomy pine, the poplar blue,
The yellow beech, the sable yew,
The slender fir, that taper grows,
The sturdy oak, with broad-spread boughs.

This is perfectly right: objects so near the eye should be distinctly marked. What next strikes him, is a *purple-grove*; that is, I presume, a grove, which has gained its *purple-blue* from distance. This is, no doubt, very just colouring; tho it is here, I think, introduced rather too early in the landscape. The blue, and purple tints belong chiefly to the most removed objects; which seem not here to be intended. Thus far however I should not greatly cavil.

The next object he surveys, is a level lawn, from which a hill, crowned with a castle, which is meant, I am informed, for that of Dinevawr, arises. Here his great want of *keeping* appears. His castle, instead of being marked with still fainter colours, than the *purple-grove*, is touched with all the strength of a foreground. You see the very ivy creeping upon it's walls. Transgressions of this kind are common in descriptive poetry. Innumerable instances might be collected from much better poems, than Grongar-hill. But I mention only the inaccuracies of an author, who, as a painter, should at least have observed the most obvious principles of his art.—With how much more picturesque beauty does Milton introduce a distant castle:

Towers, and battlements he sees,
Bosomed high in tufted trees.

Here we have all the indistinct colouring, which obscures a distant object. We do not see the iron-grated window, the portcullis, the ditch, or the rampart. We can just distinguish a castle from a tree; and a tower from a battlement.

The

The scenery around Dinevawr-castle is very beautiful; consisting of a rich profusion of wood, and lawn. But what particularly recommends it, is the great variety of ground. I know few places, where a painter might study the inequalities of a surface with more advantage.

Nothing gives so just an idea of the beautiful swellings of ground, as those of water; where it has sufficient room to undulate, and expand. In ground, which is composed of refractory materials, you are presented often with harsh lines, angular insertions, and disagreeable abruptnesses. In water, whether in gentle, or in agitated motion, all is easy; all is softened into itself; and the hills and the vallies play into each other, in a variety of beautiful forms. In agitated water abruptnesses indeed there are; but yet they are such as, in some part or other, unite properly with the surface around them; and are, on the whole, perfectly harmonious. Now if the ocean, in any of these swellings, and agitations, could be arrested, and fixed, it would produce that pleasing variety, which

we

we admire in ground. Hence it is common to take images from water, and apply them to land. We talk of an undulating line, a playing lawn, and a billowy surface; and give a much stronger, and more adequate idea, by such imagery, than plain language can easily present.

The woods, which adorn these beautiful scenes about Dinevawr-castle, and which are clumped with great beauty, consist chiefly of the finest oak; some of them of large Spanish chefnuts. There are a few, and but a few, young plantations.

The picturesque scenes, which this place affords, are numerous. Wherever the castle appears, and it appears almost every where, a landscape purely picturesque is generally presented. The ground is so beautifully disposed, that it is almost impossible to have bad composition. At the same time, the opposite side of the vale often appears as a back-ground; and makes a pleasing distance.

Some where, among the woody scenes of Dinevawr, Spenser hath conceived, with that splendor of imagination, which brightens all
his





his descriptions, the cave of Merlin to be seated. Whether there is any opening in the ground, which favours the fiction, I find no account; the stanzas however are too much in place to be omitted.

To Maridunum, that is now, by change
Of name, Cayr-Merdin called, they took their way.
There the wise Merlin whilom wont, they say,
To make his wonne low underneath the ground,
In a deep delve, far from the view of day,
That of no living wight he mote be found,
When so he counfelled, with his sprights incompast round.

And if thou ever happen that same way
To travel, go to see that dreadful place:
It is a hideous, hollow, cave-like bay
Under a rock. that lies a little space
From the swift Barry, tumbling down apace,
Emongst the woody hills of Dinevawr.
But dare thou not, I charge, in any case
To enter into that same baleful bower,
For fear the cruel fiends should thee unwares devour.

But standing high aloft, low lay thine ear;
And there such ghastly noise of iron chains,
And brazen caudrons thou shalt rombling hear,
Which thousand sprights with long enduring pains
Do tofs, that it will stun thy feeble brains.
And oftentimes great groans, and grievous founds,
When too huge toil, and labour them constrains.
And oftentimes loud strokes, and ringing sounds
From under that deep rock most horribly rebounds.*

* Book III. Cant. 3.

As we returned from Dinevawr-castle, into the road, a noble scene opened before us. It is a distant view of a grand, circular part of the vale of Towy, (circular at least in appearance) surrounded by hills, one behind another; and forming a vast amphitheatre. Through this expanse, (which is rich to profusion with all the objects of cultivation, melted together into one mass by distance) the Towy winds in various meanders. The eye cannot trace the whole serpentine course of the river; but sees it, here and there, in glittering spots, which gives the imagination a pleasing employment in making out the whole. The nearest hills partake of the richness of the vale: the distant hills, which rise gently above the others, seem barren.





S E C T. IX.

FROM Dinevawr-castle we set out, across the country, for Neath. A good turnpike-road, we were assured, would lead us thither: but we were told much of the difficulty of passing *the mountain*, as they emphatically call a ridge of high ground, which lay before us.

Though we had left the vale of Towy, the country continued to wear the same face of hill, and dale, which it had so long worn. On the right, we had still a distant view of the scenery of Dinevawr-castle; which appeared like a grand, woody bank. The woods also of Golden-grove varied the scene. Soon after, other castles, seated loftily on rising grounds, adorned other vales;

Truslan-

Truflan-castle on the right, and Caerkennel on the left.

But all these beautiful scenes, by degrees, were closed. Castles, and winding rivers, and woody banks were left behind, one after another; and we approached, nearer and nearer, the bleak mountain; which spread it's dark mantle athwart the view.

It did not however approach precipitately. Tho it had long blotted out all distance; yet it's environs afforded a present scene; and partook of the beautiful country we had passed. The ground about it's foot was agreeably disposed; swelling into a variety of little knolls, covered with oak; which a foaming rivulet, winding along, shaped into tufted islands, and peninsulas of different forms; wearing away the soil in some parts from the roots of the trees; and in others delving deep channels: while the mountain afforded a dark, solemn background to the whole.

At length we began to ascend: but before we had risen too high, we turned round to
take

take a retrospect of all the rich scenes together, which we had left behind. It was a noble view ; distance melting into distance ; till the whole was closed by a semi-circle of azure mountains, scarce distinguishable from the azure sky, which absorbed them.

Still ascending the spiral road round the shaggy side of the mountain, we arrived at, what is called, its *gate*. Here all idea of cultivation ceased. That was not deplorable : but with it our turnpike-road ceased also ; which was finished, on this side, no farther than the *mountain-gate*. We had gotten a guide however to conduct us over the pathless desert. But it being too steep, and rugged to ascend on wheels, we were obliged to lighten our carriage, and ascend on foot.

In the midst of our labour, our guide called out, that he saw a storm coming on, along the tops of the mountains ; a circumstance indeed, which in these hilly countries, cannot often be avoided. We asked him, How far it was off ? He answered, Ten minutes. In less time, sky, mountains, vallies were all wrapt in one cloud of driving rain and obscurity.

Our

Our recompence consisted in following with our eye the rear of the storm; observing through it's broken skirts, a thousand beautiful effects, and half-formed images, which were continually opening, lost, and varying; till the sun breaking out, the whole resplendent landscape appeared again, with double radiance, under the leaden gloom of the retiring tempest.

When we arrived at the top of the mountain, we found a level plain; which continued at least two miles. It was a noble terrace; but was too widely spread, to give us a display of much distant scenery.

At length, we began to descend the mountain; and soon met an excellent turnpike-road, down which we slid swiftly, in an elegant spiral; and found, when we came to the bottom, that we had spent near four hours in surmounting this great obstruction.

Having thus passed the mount Cenis of this country, we fell into the same kind of beautiful scenery on this side of it, which we had left on the other: only here the scene
was

was continually shifting, as if by magical interposition.

We were first presented with a view of a deep, woody glen, lying below us; which the eye could not penetrate, resting only on the tops, and tuftings of the trees.

This suddenly vanished; and a grand, rocky bank arose in front; richly adorned with wood.

It was instantly gone; and we were shut up in a close, woody lane.

In a moment, the lane opened on the right, and we had a view of an enchanting vale.

We caught it's beauties as a vision only. In an instant, they fled; and in their room arose two bold woody promontories. We could just discover between them, as they floated past, a creek, or the mouth of a river, or a channel of the sea; we knew not what it was: but it seemed divided by a stretch of land of dingy hue; which appeared like a sand-bank.

This scene shifting, immediately arose, on our left, a vast hill, covered with wood; through which, here and there, projected huge masses of rock.

I

In

In a few moments it vanished, and a grove of trees suddenly shot up in it's room.

But before we could even discover of what species they were, the rocky hill, which had just appeared on the left, winding rapidly round, presented itself full in front. It had now acquired a more tremendous form. The wood, which had before hid it's terrors, was now gone; and the rocks were all left, in their native wildness, every where bursting from the soil.

Many of the objects, which had floated so rapidly past us, if we had had time to examine them, would have given us sublime, and beautiful hints in landscape: some of them seemed even well combined, and ready prepared for the pencil: but, in so quick a succession, one blotted out another.—The country at length giving way on both sides, a view opened, which suffered the eye to rest upon it.

The river Neath, covered with shipping, was spread before us. It's banks were enriched with wood; amidst which arose the ruins of Neath-abbey, with it's double tower.





tower. Beyond the river, the country arose in hills; which were happily adorned, when we saw them, in a clear, serene evening, with one or two of those distant forges, or charcoal-pits, which we admired on the banks of the Wye; wreathing a light veil of smoke along their summits, and blending them with the sky.—Through this landscape we entered the town of Neath; which, with its old castle, and bridges, excited many picturesque ideas.

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 forges, or charcoal-pits, which we admired
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 veil of smoke along their summits, and
 blinding within with the sky.—Through
 the landscape we entered the town of
 Thetford, which with its old castle, and
 its many picturesque ideas,

S E C T. X.

AS we left Neath, a grand vista of woody mountains, pursuing each other along the river, and forming, no doubt, some enchanting vale, if we had had time to examine it, stretched into remote distance.

The vistas of art are tame, and formal. They consist of streets, with the unvarying repetition of doors, and windows—or they consist of trees planted nicely in rows; a succession of mere vegetable columns—or they consist of some other species of regularity. But nature's vistas are of a different cast. She forms them sometimes of mountains, sometimes of rocks, and sometimes of woods. But all her works even of this formal kind, are the works of a master. If the idea of regularity be impressed on the *general form*, the *parts* are broken with a thousand varieties.

Her vistas are models to paint from.—In *this* before us, both the mountains themselves were beautiful; and the perspective combination of them.

The broken ground about a copper-work, a little beyond the town, would afford hints for a noble landscape. Two contiguous hills appear as if riven asunder; and lay open a picturesque scene of rocky fragments, interspersed with wood; through which a torrent, forcing it's way, forms two or three cascades, before it reach the bottom.

A little beyond this, the views, which had entertained us, as we entered Neath, entertained us a second time, as we left it. The river, covered with shipping, presented itself again. The woody scenery arose on it's banks: and the abbey appeared among the woods; tho in different perspective, and in a more removed situation.

Here

Here too we were again presented with those two woody promontories, which we had seen before, with a creek, or channel between them, divided by what seemed a sand-bank. We had now approached much nearer, and found we had been right in our conjecture.* The extensive object we had seen, was the bank of Margam; which, when the sea retires, is a vast, sandy flat.

From hence we had, for a considerable time, continued views, on the left, of grand, woody promontories, pursuing each other, all rich to profusion; with sea-views on the right. Such an intermixture of highlands, and sea, where the objects are beautiful, and well disposed, makes, in general, a very pleasing mode of composition. The roughness of the mountains above, and the smooth expanse of the waters below, wonderfully aid each other by the force of contrast.

* See page 113.

From these views we were hurried, at once, upon a bleak sea-coast; which gave a kind of relief to the eye, surfeited with rich landscape to satiety. Margam-sand-bank, which, seen partially, afforded a sweet, chastising tint to the verdure of the woody promontories, through which we had twice seen it; became now (when unsupported, and spread abroad in all it's extension) a cold, disgusting object.—But relief was every where at hand; and we seldom saw it long, without some intervention of woody scenery.

As we approached the river Abravon, the country degenerated still more. Margam-sand-bank, which was now only the boundary of marshes, became offensive to the eye; and tho, on the left, the woody hills continued still shooting after us, yet they had lost their pleasing shapes. No variety of breaks, like the members of architecture, gave a lightness, and elegance to their forms. No mantling furniture invested their sides; nor tufted fringe adorned their promontories; nor clumps of scattered oak discovered the
sky,

sky, through interstices, along their towering summits. Instead of this, they had degenerated into mere uniform lumps of matter; and were every where overspread with one heavy, uninterrupted bush.

Of this kind were Lord Mansell's woods, which covered a promontory. Time, with it's lenient hand, may hereafter hang new beauties upon these hills; when it has corrected their heaviness, by improving the luxuriance of youthful foliage into the lighter forms of aged trees.

From Lord Mansell's to Pyle, which stands on a bleak coast, the spirit of the country is totally lost.

Here we found the people employed in sending provisions to the shore, where a Dutch West-India ship had just been wrecked. Fifteen lives were lost; and among them the whole family of a Zealand merchant, who was bringing his children for education to Amsterdam. The populace came down in large bodies to pillage the wreck; which the officers of the customs, and gentlemen of the country, assembled to protect.—It was a busy scene,

scene, composed of multitudes of men, carts, horses, and horsemen,

The bustle of a croud is not ill-adapted to the pencil: but the management of it requires great artifice. The whole must be massed together, and considered as one body.

I mean not to have the whole body so agglomerated, as to consist of no detached groups: but to have these groups (of which there should not be more than two or three) appear to belong to one whole, by the artifice of composition, and the effect of light.

This great whole must be varied also in it's parts. It is not enough to stick bodies and heads together. Figures must be contrasted with figures; and life, spirit, and action must pervade the whole.

Thus in managing a croud, and in managing a landscape, the same general rules are to be observed. Tho the *parts* must be *contrasted*, the *whole* must be *combined*. But the difficulty is the greater in a croud; as it's parts, consisting of animated bodies, require
a nicer

a nicer observation of form: being all similar likewise, they require more art in the combination of them.

Composition indeed has never a more difficult work, than when it is engaged in combining a croud. When a number of people, all coloured alike, are to be drawn up in rank and file; it is not in the art of man to combine them in a picturesque manner. We can introduce a rencounter of horse, where all regularity is broken—or we can exhibit a few general officers, with their aids de camp, on the foreground, and cover a fighting army with smoke at a distance; but the files of war, the regiment, or squadron in military array, admit no picturesque composition. Modern heroes therefore must not look to have their achievements recorded on canvas, till they abrogate their formal arts.—But even when we take all the advantages of shape, and colour, with which the human form can be varied, or cloathed, we find it still a matter of difficulty enough.

I do not immediately recollect having seen a croud better managed, than Hogarth has managed one in the last print of his idle prentice. In combining the multifarious company,

pany, which attends the spectacle of an execution, he hath exemplified all the observations I have made. I have not the print before me; but I have often admired it in this light: nor do I recollect observing any thing offensive in it; which is rare in the management of such a multitude of figures.

The subject before us is as well adapted, as any species of croud can be, to exhibit the beauties of composition. Horses, carts, and men, make a good assemblage: and this variety in the parts would appear to great advantage in contrast with the simplicity of a winding shore; and of a stranded ship, (a large, dark object,) heeling on one side, in a corner of the piece.

An old castle, also enriches the scene; till at length the terrace giving way, we sink into the vale; and enter Cowbridge.

S. E. C. T. XI.

FROM Pyle the country grows still worse, till at last it degenerates into a vile heath; and continues a long time totally unadorned, or at best with a few transient beauties.

At *Bridgend*, where we meet the river *Ogmore*, a beautiful landscape bursts again upon us: Woody banks arise on both sides; on the right especially, which continue a considerable way, marking the course of the river. On the left is a rich distance.

From hence we pass in view of cultivated vallies, into which the rich distance, we had just seen, began to form itself: while the road winds over a kind of terrace above them.

An

An old castle, also enriches the scene; till at length the terrace giving way, we sink into the vale; and enter Cowbridge.

The heights beyond Cowbridge give us the first view of the Bristol channel on the right. The country between the eye and the water has a marshy appearance; but being well blended, and the lines broken, it makes a tolerable distance. The road passes through pleasant inclosed lanes.

At the fifth stone, before we reached Cardiff, we had a most grand, and extensive view, from the heights of Clanditham. It contained an immense stretch of country, melting gradually into a faint blue semicircle of mountains, which edged the horizon. — This scene indeed, painted in syllables, words, and sentences, appears very like some of the scenes we had met with before: but in nature it was very different from any of them.

In

(* blowid; of Cotswold; among the abrupt heights of Cotswold; we have the chance of being presented with a

In distant views of cultivated countries, seen from lofty stands; the parts, which lie nearest the eye, are commonly disgusting. The divisions of property into squares, rhomboids, and other mathematical forms, are unpleasant. A view of this kind therefore does not assume it's beauty, till you descend a little into the vale; till the hedgrows begin to lengthen; and form those agreeable *discriminations*, of which Virgil * takes notice; where fields, and meadows become extended streaks; and yet are broken in various parts by rising grounds, castles, and other objects, with which distances abound: melting away from the eye, in one general azure tint; just, here and there, diversified with a few lines of light and shade; and dotted with a few indistinct objects. Then, if we are so happy as to find a ruin, a spreading tree, a bold rock, or some other object, large enough, with it's appendages to become a foreground, and balance the distance, (such as we found

* ————— et latè discriminat agros.

Æn. II. 144.

among the abrupt heights of Coteswold; *) we have the chance of being presented with a noble picture, which *distance alone* cannot give.

Hence appears the absurdity of carrying a painter to the top of a high hill, to take a view. He cannot do it. Extension alone, tho' amusing in nature, will never make a picture. It *must* be *supported*.

Cardiff lies low; tho' it is not unpleasantly seated, on the land-side, among woody hills. As we *approached*, it appeared with more of the furniture of antiquity about it, than any town we had seen in Wales: but *on the spot* the picturesque eye finds it too intire to be in full perfection. The castle, which was formerly the prison of the unfortunate Robert, son of William the first, who languished here the last twenty years of his life, is still, I believe, a prison, and in good repair.

From the town and parts adjacent, the windings and approach of the river Tave from the sea, with a full tide, make a grand appearance. This is, on the whole, the finest estuary, we had seen in Wales.

* See page 10.

From the heights beyond Cardiff, the views, of the channel, on the right, continue; and of the Welsh mountains on the left. The Sugar-loaf, near Abergavenny, appears still distinctly. The road leads through inclosed lanes.

Newport lies pleasantly on a declivity. A good view might be taken from the retrospect of the river, the bridge, and the castle. A few slight alterations would make it picturesque.

Beyond Newport some of the views of the channel were finer than any we had seen. The coast, tho it continues flat, becomes more woody, and the parts are larger.

About seven miles from Newport, the road winds among woody hills; which, here and there, form beautiful dips at their interfections. On one of these knolls stand the ruins of a

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castle;

castle ; which has once made a grand appearance ; but it is now degraded into a modern dwelling.

As we approached the passage over the Bristol channel, the views of it became still more interesting. On the right, we left the magnificent ruins of Caldicot-castle ; and arrived at the ferry-house, about three in the afternoon, where we were so fortunate as to find the boat preparing to set sail. It had attempted to cross at high water, in the morning : but after toiling three hours against the wind, it was obliged to put back. This afforded another opportunity, when the water was at ebb : for the boat can pass only at the two extremes of the tide ; and seldom oftener than once in a day.

We had scarce alighted at the ferry-house, when we heard the boatman winding his horn from the beach, about a quarter of a mile below, as a signal to bring down the horses. When they were all embarked, the horn sounded again for the passengers. A very multifarious company assembled ; and a miserable walk we had to the boat through
 sludge ;

sludge; and over shelving, and slippery rocks. When we got to it, we found eleven horses on board, and above thirty people; and our chaise (which we had intended to convert into a cabin during the voyage) flung into the shrouds.

The boat, after some struggling with the shelves, at length gained the channel. The wind was unfavourable, which obliged us to make several *tacks*, as the seamen phrase them. These tacks occasioned a fluttering in the sail: and this produced a fermentation among the horses; till their fears reduced them again to order.

Livy gives us a beautiful picture of the terror of cattle, in a scene of this kind.—“*Primus erat pavor, quum, soluta rati, in altum raperentur. Ibi urgentes inter se, cedentibus extremis ab aquâ, trepidationem aliquantam edebant; donec quietem ipse timor circumspicientibus aquam fecisset.*”*

* Lib. XXI. cap. xxviii.

The scenery of this short voyage was of little value. We had not here the steep, folding banks of the Wye to produce a succession of new landscapes. Our picture now was motionless. From the beginning to the end of the voyage, it continued the same. It was only a display of water; varied by that little change introduced by distance, on a coast, which seen from so low a point, as the surface of the water, became a mere thread. The screens bore no proportion to the area.

After beating near two hours against the wind our voyage concluded, as it began, with an uncomfortable walk through the sludge, to the high-water mark.

The worst part of the affair, is, the usage of horses. If they are unruly, or any accident occurs, there is hardly a possibility, at least if the vessel be crowded, of affording them relief. Early in our voyage, as the boat heeled, one of the poor animals fell down. Many an ineffectual struggle it made to rise; but nothing could be done, till we arrived at the other side.

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The operation too of landing horses, is equally disagreeable. They are forced out of the boat, through an aperture in the side of it; which is so inconvenient a mode of egress, that in leaping, many have been hurt from the difficulty of disengaging their hinder legs.

This passage, as well as the other over the Severn (for there is one also a little above) are often esteemed dangerous. The tides are uncommonly rapid in this channel; and when a brisk wind happens to blow in a contrary direction, the waters are rough. The boats too are often ill-managed; for what is done repeatedly, is often done carelessly. A British admiral, I have heard, who had lived much at sea, riding up to one of these ferries, with an intention to pass over, and observing the boat, as she was working across the channel from the other side, declared he durst not trust himself to the seamanship of such fellows as managed her; and turning his horse, went round by Gloucester.

Several melancholy accidents indeed within the course of a dozen years, have thrown discredit on these ferries. One I had from a gentleman, who himself providentially

escaped being lost. He went to the beach, just as the vessel was unmooring. His horse had been embarked before, together with sixty head of cattle. A passage with such company appeared so disagreeable, that he, and about six or seven passengers more, whom he found on the beach, among whom was a young lady, agreed to get into an open boat, and be towed over by the large one.

The passage was rough, and they observed the cattle on board the larger vessel, rather troublesome. About half way over, an ox, which stood near the aperture in the side of the vessel, mentioned above for the entrance, and egress of cattle, intangled his horn in a wooden slider, which closes it, and which happened, according to the careless custom of boatmen, to be unpinned. The beast finding his head fixed, and endeavouring to disengage himself, drew up the slider. The vessel heeled; the tide rushed in; and all was instant confusion. The danger, and the impossibility of opposing it, in such a croud, struck every one at once.

In the mean time, the passengers in the open boat, who were equally conscious of the ruin, had nothing left, but to cut
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the rope, which tied them to the sinking vessel. But not a knife could be found in the whole company. After much confusion, a little, neat, tortoise-shell penknife was produced; with which unequal instrument they just got the rope severed, when the large vessel, and all its contents, went down. All on board perished, except two or three oxen, which were seen floating on the surface; and it was believed got to shore.

The joy of the passengers in the boat was however short-lived. It soon appeared they had escaped only one mode of death. They were left to themselves in a wide expanse of water; at the mercy of a tide, ebbing with a violent current to the sea; without oars, or sail; and without one person on board, who had ever handled either. A gentleman among them had just authority enough to keep them all quiet; without which their safety could not have been insured a moment. He then took up a paddle, the only instrument on board, with an intention, if possible, to get the boat on shore. But the young lady, who was his niece, throwing her arms around

him, in an agony of despair, not knowing what she did, would not let him proceed. He was obliged to quiet her by threatening in a furious tone to strike her down instantly with the oar, if she did not desist. Notwithstanding all his efforts, they were hurried away by the ebbing waters, as far as King-road; where the violence of the tide slackening, he prevented the boat from going out to sea; and got her by degrees to shore.

The gentleman, who told me this story, I observed, was one of the persons, who were saved. From him I had the account of the loss of an open boat, in the same passage, from the obstinacy of a passenger.

The wind was rough, and a person on board lost his hat; which floated away in a contrary direction. He begged the waterman to turn round to recover it: but the waterman told him, it was as much as their lives were worth to attempt it. On which the passenger, who seemed to be a tradesman, started up, seized the helm, and swore the fellow should return. In the struggle, the helm got a wrong twist, and the boat instantly filled, and went to the bottom. It appeared afterwards that the hat was a hat of value;
for

for the owner had secreted several bills in the lining of it.

For ourselves however we found the passage only a disagreeable one; and if there was any danger, we saw it not. The danger chiefly, I suppose, arises from carelessness and overloading the boat.

As our chaise could not be landed, till the tide flowed up the beach, we were obliged to wait at the ferry-house. Our windows overlooked the channel, and the Welsh-coast, which seen from a higher stand, became now a woody, and beautiful distance. The wind was brisk, and the sun clear; except that, at intervals, it was intercepted by a few floating clouds. The playing lights, which arose from this circumstance, on the opposite coast, were very picturesque. Pursuing each other, they sometimes just caught the tufted tops of trees; then gleaming behind shadowy woods, they spread along the vales, till they faded insensibly away.

Often these partial lights are more stationary; when the clouds, which fling their lengthened shadows on distant grounds, hang,
some

some time, balanced in the air. But whenever found, or from whatever source derived, the painter observes them with the greatest accuracy: he marks their different appearances; and lays them up in his memory among the choice ingredients of distant landscape. Almost alone they are sufficient to vary distance. A *multiplicity of objects*, melted harmoniously together, contribute to *enrich* it; but without throwing in those *gleaming lights*, the artist can hardly avoid *beaviness*.*

* When the shadows of floating clouds fall upon the sides of mountains, they have a bad effect. — See Picturesque Observat. on Scotch landscape, vol. II. p. 152.

S E C T. XII.

FROM the ferry-house to Bristol, the views are amusing. The first scene presented to us, was a spacious lawn, about a mile in diameter, the area of which was flat; and the boundary, a grand, woody bank; adorned with towers and villas, standing either boldly near the top; or seated in woody recesses near the bottom. The horizon line is well varied, and broken.

The whole of this landscape is too large; and not characterized enough to make a picture; but the contrast between the plain, and the wood, both of which are objects of equal grandeur, is pleasing: and many of the parts, taken separately, would form into good composition.

When

When we left the plain, the road carried us into shady lanes, winding round woody eminences; one of which was crowned with an artificial castle. The castle indeed, which consisted of one tower, might have been better imagined: the effect however was good, tho the object was paltry.

About three miles on this side of Bristol, we had a grand view of rising country. It consisted of a pleasing mixture of wood, and lawn: the parts were large: and the houses, and villages scattered in good proportion. The whole, when we saw it, was overspread with a purplish tint, which, as the objects were so near, we could not account for; but it united all the parts together in very pleasing harmony.

Nature's landscapes are generally harmonized. Whether the sky is inlightened, or whether it lowers; whether it is tinted, or whether it is untinted, it gives it's yellow lustre, or it's grey obscurity, to the surface of the earth. It is but seldom however, that
we

we meet with those *strong harmonizing tints*, which the landscape before us presented.

As the air is the vehicle of these tints, distant objects will of course participate of them in the greatest degree; the foregrounds will be little affected, as they are seen only through a very thin veil of air. But when the painter thinks it proper to introduce these strong tints into his distances, he will give his foregrounds likewise in some degree, a participating hue; more perhaps than in reality belongs to them; or, at least, he will work them up with such colours, mute, or vivid, as accord best with the general tone of his landscape.—How far it is proper for him to attempt these uncommon appearances of nature, is not a decided question. If the landscape before us should be painted with that full purple glow, with which we saw it overspread; the connoisseur would probably take offence, and call it affected.

The approach to Bristol is grand; and the environs every where shew the neighbourhood of an opulent city; tho the city itself lay concealed, till we entered it. For a considerable

considerable way, the road led between stone-walls, which bounded the fields on each side. This boundary, tho, of all others, the most unpleasing, is yet proper as you approach a great town: it is a kind of connecting thread.

The narrowness of the port of Bristol, which is formed by the banks of the river, is very striking. It may be called a dry harbour, notwithstanding the river: for the vessels, when the tide ebbs, lie on an ouzy bed, in a deep channel. The returning tide lifts them to the height of the wharfs. It exhibits of course none of those beautiful winding shores, which often adorn an estuary. The port of Bristol was probably first formed, when vessels, afraid of being cut from their harbours by corsairs, ran up high into the country for security.

The great church is a remnant only of the ancient fabric. It has been a noble pile, when the nave was complete, and the stunted tower crowned with a spire, as I suppose, it once was. We were sorry we did not look into Ratcliff-church, which is said to be an elegant piece of Gothic architecture.

The

The country around Bristol is beautiful; tho we had not time to examine it. The scenery about the Hot-wells is in a great degree picturesque. The river is cooped between two high hills; both of which are adorned with a rich profusion of rock, wood, and verdure. Here is no offskip indeed; but as far as *foregrounds* alone make a picture, (and they will do much better alone, than *distances*) we are presented with a very beautiful one.—Between these hills stands the pump-room, close to the river; and every ship, that sails into Bristol, sails under it's windows.

The road between Bristol and Bath contains very little worth notice. We had been informed of some grand retrospect views; but we did not find them. We were told afterwards, that there are two roads between Bath and Bristol; of which the Gloucestershire road is the more picturesque. If so, we unfortunately took the wrong one.

At

: At Bath the buildings are strikingly splendid: but the picturesque eye finds little amusement among such objects. The circus, from a corner of one of the streets, that run into it, is thrown into perspective; and if it be happily inlightened, is seen with advantage. The crescent is built in a simpler, and greater style of architecture.

I have heard an ingenious friend, Col. Mitford, who is well-versed in the theory of the picturesque, speak of a very beautiful, and grand effect of light, and shade, which he had sometimes observed from an afternoon-sun, in a bright winter-day, on this structure. No such effect could happen in summer; as the sun, in the same meridian, would be then too high. A grand mass of light, falling on one side of the Crescent, melted imperceptibly into as grand a body of shade on the other; and the effect rose from the *opposition*, and *graduation* of these extremes. It was still increased by the pillars, and other members of architecture, which beautifully varied, and broke both the light and the shade; and gave a wonderful richness to each. The whole,

whole, he said, seemed like an effort of nature to set off art; and the eye roved about in astonishment to see a mere mass of regularity become the ground of so enchanting a display of harmony, and picturesque effect. The elliptical form of the building was the magical source of this exhibition.

As objects of curiosity, the parades, the baths, the rooms, and the abbey, are all worth seeing. The rising grounds about Bath, as they appear from the town, are a great ornament to *it*: tho they have nothing pleasing in *themselves*. There is no variety in the out-line; no breaks; no masses of woody scenery

From Bath to Chippenham the road is pleasant; but I know not, that it deserves any higher epithet.

From Chippenham to Marlborough, we passed over a wild plain, which conveys no idea, but that of vastness, unadorned with beauty.

Nature, in scenes like these, seems only to have chalked out her designs. The ground

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is laid in ; but left unfinished. The ornamental part is wanting—the river, or the lake winding through the bottom, which lies in form to receive it—the hanging rocks, to adorn some shooting promontory—and the woody screens to encompass, and give richness to the whole.

Marlborough-down is one of those vast, dreary scenes, which our ancestors, in the dignity of a state of nature, chose as a repository of their dead. Every where we see the tumuli, which were raised over their ashes ; among which the largest is Silbury-hill. These structures have no date in the history of time ; and will be, in all probability, among it's most lasting monuments. Our ancestors had no ingenious arts to gratify their ambition ; and as they could not aim at immortality by a bust, a statue, or a piece of bas-relief, they endeavoured to obtain it by works of enormous labour. It was thus in other barbarous countries. Before the introduction of arts in Egypt, kings endeavoured to immortalize themselves by lying under pyramids.

As

As we passed, what are called, the ruins of Abury, we could not but admire the industry, and sagacity of those antiquarians, who can trace a regular plan in such a mass of apparent confusion.*

At the great inn at Marlborough, formerly a mansion of the Somerset-family, one of these tumuli stands in the garden, and is whimsically cut into a spiral walk; which, ascending imperceptibly, is lengthened into half a mile. The conceit at least gives an idea of the bulk of these massy fabrics.

From Marlborough the road takes a more agreeable appearance. Savernake-forest, through which it passes, is a pleasant, woody scene: and great part of the way afterwards is adorned with little groves, and opening glades, which form a variety of second distances on the right.

* See an account of Abury by Dr. Stukely.

But we seldom found a foreground to set them off to advantage.

The country soon degenerates into open corn-lands: but near Hungerford, which is not an unpleasant town, it recovers a little spirit; and the road passes through close lanes; with breaks here and there, into the country between the boles of the trees.

As we approach Newberry, we had a view of Donnington-castle; one of those scenes, where the unfortunate Charles reaped some glory. Nothing now remains of this gallant fortress, but a gate-way and two towers. The hill, on which it stands, is so overgrown with brush-wood, that we could scarce discern any vestiges either of the walls of the castle; or of the works, which had been thrown up against it.

This whole woody hill, and the ruins upon it, are now tenanted, as we were informed by our guide, only by ghosts; which however add much to the dignity of these forsaken habitations;

habitations; and are for that reason, of great use in description.

In Virgil's days, when the Tarpeian rock was graced by the grandeur of the capitol, it was sufficiently enobled. But in it's early state, when it was *sylvestribus horrida dumis*, it wanted something to give it splendor. The poet therefore has judiciously added a few ideas of the awful kind; and has contrived by this machinery to impress it with more dignity in it's rude state, than it possessed in it's adorned one:—

Jam tum religio pavidos terrebat agrestes

Dira loci: jam tum sylvam, saxumque timebant.

“Hoc nemus, hunc, inquit, frondoso vertice collem,

(*Quis Deus, incertum est*) habitat Deus. Arcades ipsum

Credunt se vidisse Jovem, cum sæpe nigrantem

Ægida concuteret dextrâ, nimboſque cieret.”

Of these imaginary beings the painter, in the mean time, makes little use. The introduction of them, instead of raising, would depreciate his subject. The characters indeed of Jupiter, Juno, and all that progeny, are rendered as familiar to us, through the antique, as those of Alexander, and Cæsar. But the judicious artist will be cautious how he goes farther

farther. The poet will introduce a phantom of any kind without scruple. He knows his advantage. He speaks to the *imagination*; and if he deal only in *general ideas*, as all good poets on such subjects will do, every reader will form the phantom according to his *own* conception. But the *painter*, who speaks to the *eye*, has a more difficult work. He cannot deal in *general* terms: he is *obliged* to *particularize*: and it is not likely, that the spectator will have the same idea of a phantom, which he has.—The painter therefore acts prudently in abstaining, as much as possible, from the representation of fictitious beings.

The country about Newberry furnished little amusement. But if it is not *picturesque*, it is very *historical*.

In every *historical country* there are a set of ideas, which peculiarly belong to it. *Hastings*, and *Tewksbury*; *Runnemede*, and *Clarendon*, have all their associate ideas. The ruins of abbeys, and castles have another set: and it is a soothing amusement in travelling to *assimilate* the mind to the *ideas of the country*. The ground

we

we now trod, has many historical ideas associated with it; two great battles, a long siege, and the death of the gallant Lord Falkland.

The road from Newberry to Reading leads through lanes, from which a flat and woody country is exhibited on the right; and rising grounds on the left. Some unpleasant common fields intervene.

In the new road from Reading to Henley, the high grounds overlook a very picturesque distance on the right. The country indeed is flat; but this is a circumstance we do not dislike in a distance, when it contains a variety of wood and plain; and when the parts are large, and well-combined.

Henley lies pleasantly among woody hills: but the chalk, bursting every where from the soil, strikes the eye in spots; and injures the landscape.

From

we now tread has many historical ideas associated with it; two great battles, a long - From hence we struck again into the road across Hounslow-heath; having crowded much more within the space of a fortnight (to which our time was limited) than we ought to have done.

THE END.



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